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ABSTRACT

Most African countries have devoted considerable attention to educating the generations of people born since the independence era. Despite their efforts, however, African governments continue to face rising illiteracy, grade-repetition, and drop-out rates, as well as growing numbers of expulsions. This report presents a synthesis of the main findings of transnational studies produced between 1995 and 1999 regarding basic education in West and Central Africa. The report states that researchers gathered information concerning the opinions, experience, and achievements of the main actors and beneficiaries of education, addressing the following themes in two sections: (1) the factors associated with access to schooling and the retention of students within the primary sector (Cote d'Ivoire and Gambia); and (2) the relationships between community participation and access to and quality of education (Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, and Togo). Following an introduction, each chapter of the report is devoted to statistics and opinions (with references) regarding these seven African countries. Recommendations for improving educational access, retention, and quality are included in the report. (BT)

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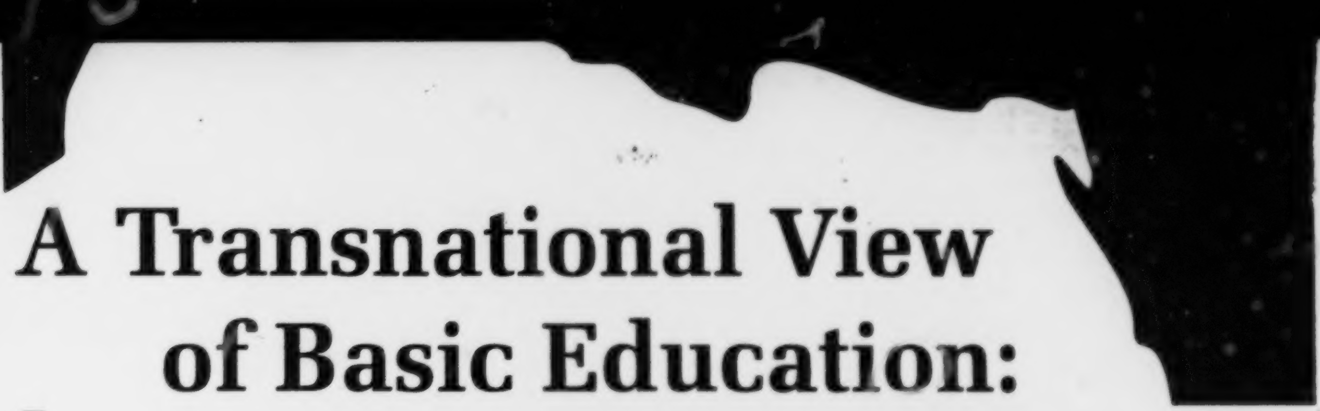

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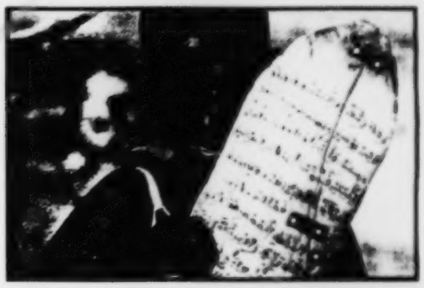

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A Transnational View of Basic Education:

Issues of Access, Quality, and Community Participation in West and Central Africa

January 2002

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Finally, none of these studies could have been carried out without the volunteer coordination and careful steering of the national coordinators of the Network's member countries.

ERNWACA.

Acronyms and abreviations

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
APE	Association de parents d'élèves (Students' Parents Association)
CE	Cours élémentaire (Elementary grades (1 and 2))
CEP	Certificat d'études primaires (Certificate of Primary Education)
CFA	Communauté financière Africaine (francs) (African financial community)
CM	Cours moyen (1 and 2) (Middle grades)
CP	Cours préparatoire (1 and 2) (Preparatory grades)
EFA	Education for All
EIP	Equity Improvement Program
ENI/ENIA	Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs et d'Instituteurs Adjoints (Institute of Teachers and Assistant Teachers)
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FGD	Focus group discussions
GCE- A Level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
GCE- O Level	General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
GES	Ghana Education Service
GNP	Gross national product
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
INFRE	Institut national pour la formation et la recherche en éducation (National Institute for Training and Research in Education)
INSAE	Institut national de statistiques et d'analyse économique (National institute of statistics and economic analysis)
INSE	Institut national des sciences de l'éducation (National institute for educational sciences)

JSS	Junior Secondary School
MEB	Ministère de l'éducation de base (Ministry of Basic Education)
MEN	Ministère de l'éducation nationale (Ministry of Education)
MOE	Ministry of Education
MPRE	Ministère du plan et de la restructuration économique (Ministry of Economic Planning and Restucturing)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PEO	Principal Education Officer
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
REO	Regional Education Office
Rho	Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SMC	School Management Committee
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TDC	Town Development Committees
TDRL	Taxe de développement régional et local (Regional and Local Development Tax)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
ZAF	Zone d'alphabétisation fonctionnelle (Functional Literacy Zone)

Chapter 1

Introduction

Luc Gilbert
Brehima Tounkara

Most African countries have devoted considerable attention to educating the generations of people born since the independence era. Their efforts reflect the political will expressed by the Charter on Education adopted at the 1961 Conference of Addis Ababa and the 1990 Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All, and subsequently reaffirmed in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action. These international agreements have been made concrete through implementing programs aimed at reforming the education systems inherited from the colonial period. Those programs have aimed to convey a new vision of society which, while respecting African identity, would allow these countries to take an increasingly active part in the community of nations and to affirm the right of education for all.

The Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa

The Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) was created in 1988 by a group of university academics and researchers who had benefited from the Research Training Program for Western Africa, launched in 1974 in collaboration with the International Development Research Center, the United Nations Development Fund, and the Ford Foundation.

ERNWACA's primary mission is to initiate and develop a dialogue between researchers and the decision makers responsible for managing educational systems. Within this context, ERNWACA is concerned with the production—and above all the dissemination—of research findings conducted by institutions and researchers. The present publication is part of ERNWACA's effort to support the reform of Africa's education systems, with a view to meeting the new challenges of the third millennium.

Despite their efforts, African governments continue to face rising illiteracy, grade-repetition, and drop-out rates, as well as growing numbers of expulsions. In 1993, the members of the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) began to turn their attention to the main causes of this situation, which they identified as the following:

- schools are not equipped to address the realities of their surrounding environments. As a result, they do not meet the community's needs and parents are not motivated to invest in a system perceived as offering little hope of improving living conditions;
- demographic growth has outstripped economic growth, limiting the government's ability to respond to families' requirements in terms of schooling;
- distribution of responsibilities between the government and communities, with respect to the management of education, is not equitable;
- a severe shortage of financial and other resources for school infrastructures, poorly qualified teachers, and very low household incomes.

In the wake of this definition process, a number of research themes were selected and various joint projects conducted, with a view to supporting the development and implementation of policies designed to achieve greater social justice in education. This document represents a synthesis of the main findings of studies produced between 1995 and 1999 by seven member countries of ERNWACA, within the context of "transnational agendas." Researchers gathered information concerning the opinions, experiences, and achievements of the main actors and beneficiaries of education, such as school and district administrations, teachers, parents, and students. In doing so, they addressed the following themes:

- the factors associated with access to schooling and the retention of students within the primary sector: Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia;
- the relationships between community participation and access to and quality of education: Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, and Togo.

An international committee of teachers and researchers, convened in 1999, reviewed the studies. This synthesis offers avenues for reflection and action for decision makers in their efforts to affirm education as a basic human right.

Access and retention of students in Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia

The results of the studies conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia show that:

- *Demographic growth limits access and retention:* Growth rates in Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia are among the highest in the world. This creates pressure on the demand for education, and this pressure is intensified by reduced investment in education, due to the economic crises and structural adjustment policies. The result is that infrastructures (schools, classes, and teacher accommodation) are ill-adapted and inadequate and, as a result, communities are not free to school their children as they wish. This constraint is accentuated in rural environments and in Côte d'Ivoire, where demand for schooling is greater.

- *Religious beliefs have a negative influence on the demand for education:* Fears linked to conversion efforts by the Christian church and to delayed marriage for girls represent major constraints on the demand for education among certain social categories in conventional schools. The result is a low attendance rate. This can be due to national legislation (notably in Côte d'Ivoire, where Koranic schools are not officially recognized by the country's Ministry of Education) or unequal access, which works to the detriment of girls. This is notably the case in the Gambia, where the influence of Koranic education is stronger.

- *Parents' perception of education determines the length of children's school careers:* The most commonly held view among all categories of respondents in Côte d'Ivoire and in the Gambia was education's importance as a factor in social success. In the long term, education functions as a springboard, enabling children to gain access to employment. Parents hope that they, too, will be able to gain from that process. However, the pressure for children to perform well in the end-of primary school exams coupled with the seeming conflict of certain school subjects with families' cultural and religious practices diminishes Gambian parents' confidence in the value of education. In Côte d'Ivoire, dissatisfaction is linked to unemployment among school graduates, the image of the school as an instrument of "westernization" (leading to a disconnect with the traditional environment), and the cost of schooling, which contrasts with the impoverished state of rural populations. The result is a certain degree of disaffection among parents with regard to school.

- *The quality of education is proportionate to access and retention:* Poor quality within educational systems is reflected largely in teachers who are poorly qualified and who lack teaching skills, in poorly equipped classrooms, and in overcrowded schools. The results are high dropout rates at the end of the primary cycle, due to grade-repetitions in sixth grade and expulsions, and low retention rates during the primary cycle itself, caused by grade-repetitions, which in themselves represent a very high additional cost for parents.

Relationships between community participation, access and quality in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, and Togo

Do the virtues of community participation in education have any real basis? Does that participation really lead to improvements in access to and quality of education? Communities have been participating in the management of the educational system for many years. Governments recognize the need for their involvement. They support that involvement through major policy initiatives which, because they are not based on detailed knowledge of the problem, may impose constraints on the local population and backfire, notably with regard to access and quality.

Community participation is many faceted, but its impact is uneven

- In countries that have addressed this issue, community participation generally takes the form of financial, material, and/or human contributions. The predominance of one or other of these forms of contribution is strongly linked to the socio-professional activities of the community. In Benin, for example, rural communities play a more prominent role in basic education, and their financial contributions are significantly higher than those of urban communities. Women's share through unpaid work is just as significant. In Cameroon, communities' first responsibility is to enroll their children in school. The community's next responsibilities are to: (i) pay APE fees; (ii) purchase school supplies; (iii) work in the classroom as required; (iv) monitor students' work, especially in urban environments; and (v) monitor teachers' work. In rural environments, educational and administrative matters are regarded as responsibilities of the government.

- Communities presently participate in basic education on a partial basis. When they do organize themselves to participate, it is often, as in the case of Benin, under the impetus or at the initiative of participants from outside the community, especially the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Furthermore, in most countries, the participation of communities in the management of education and in the educational process remains very low, despite the dynamism of the Students' Parents Associations (APEs). These APEs nevertheless constitute one of the most striking features of the community's participation in basic education.

- New forms of community participation have proven very effective in terms of increasing access to and quality of education in Ghana. Communities have: (i) managed schools through school-management committees; (ii) developed curricula; (iii) intervened as teachers in areas related to culture; (iv) supervised and maintained school properties; (v) supervised and monitored students' attendance; (vi) conducted campaigns to recruit students into the schools; (vii) encouraged teachers to become more effective; and (viii) supervised students at home.

Some factors have a direct impact on community participation

- In Cameroon, the best results in terms of access to and the quality of education have been achieved in communities that have the following characteristics: (i) a positive perception of basic education; (ii) regular and stable household incomes; (iii) a history of social mobilization through organized and dynamic structures; (iv) a form of educational involvement that goes beyond mere financial contributions; (v) the presence of external support mechanisms or of a development mechanism within the community; and (vi) the presence, within the community, of role models whose social status derives from their education.

- In Benin, the main factors favoring and encouraging community participation are, in order of importance: (i) the profitability of income-generating activities (implying the availability of financial resources); (ii) the involvement of the community at each stage of the decision-making process; (iii) government aid, through abolition or regulation of school fees; (iv) good results achieved by students on completion of their studies; (v) the willingness to develop the community; and (vi) the creation of an effective institutional framework.

- In Ghana, the factors that have a positive influence on community participation include: (i) communities' perception of the usefulness of their participation; (ii) the existence of organized groups in the community and the quality of their leadership; (iii) the quality of communication between the Ministry of Education and the communities, and between members of the teaching staff and members of the community; (iv) the degree to which members of the community are made aware of their educational responsibilities; and (v) the degree of encouragement and support given to school-related community initiatives. On the other hand, community participation is seriously hampered by: (i) poverty; (ii) illiteracy; (iii) the lack of jobs for school graduates; and (iv) ignorance of the concept of free schooling.

The effect of participation on access and quality varies according to the type of school, its approach to education, and its history

- In Mali, even though high participation may show a correlation with an increase in access, this effort is most strongly felt in the community schools and literacy centers. With respect to the acquisition of knowledge, only in literacy centers does high participation show a correlation with better student performance.

- In Mali, traditional schools do not greatly influence the level of access to education. It is mainly the Muslim schools, in urban districts, and the community schools and literacy centers (which are found more in rural areas) that have managed to increase enrollment rates. With regard to the quality of teaching, community schools have shown an ability to produce good results. Forging closer links between literacy centers and community schools does improve the return on education at these two types of schools, especially if this approach is combined with efforts to provide professional development to teachers.

Communities cannot improve access and quality on their own

- In Togo, despite efforts made by parents, the students' level of knowledge and skills acquisition remains low. The school system's sole aim is to achieve success in national examinations, thereby hampering the development of practical knowledge/expertise that might be directly useful in daily life. Furthermore, management of parents' school fees does not directly benefit children, and younger parents, who invest more in the schooling of their children, are not convinced that the funds they contribute are used appropriately.

- Obstacles to improving the quality of education include: (i) failure to integrate society's values into school curricula; (ii) limited acquisition of basic knowledge and skills by the students, notably girls; (iii) multiple problems related to learning conditions, including shortage of and inappropriate textbooks, overcrowded schools, obsolete teaching methods, poorly qualified teachers; and (iv) inappropriate management of parents' school fees.

- The challenge of integrating communities into the financing and the administrative and pedagogical management of the educational system is based on the following factors: (i) schools are not managed with a long-term perspective, which involves rigorous strategic planning; (ii) people are not accustomed to integrating the school into a development project; (iii) supervisors and principals lack the managerial training that would enable them to define their actions within a development perspective; and (iv) the relationships between communities and school authorities are complicated by the authorities' reluctance to share decision-making powers and by the weight of bureaucratic tradition.

Recommendations for improving access, retention, and quality

Actions to strengthen the role of communities in education

◆ Begin a process of social dialogue aimed at redefining the roles and responsibilities of the different social actors with respect to basic education and initiating a process designed to ensure that basic education becomes adapted to and integrated into the surrounding environment.

◆ In conjunction with government central and regional authorities, develop and implement awareness-raising and mobilization programs, designed to:

- raise people's awareness of the benefits of basic education;
- explain the context that necessitates community participation;
- give women responsibilities within the basic education process;
- initiate a redefinition of the respective roles of the government and the communities;
- promote the partnership between the government and the communities;
- allow education officials to direct and facilitate the participation of communities in basic education;
- make the reforms and responsibilities more acceptable to the communities.

◆ Strengthen and enhance people's participation through technical assistance enabling communities and APEs to increase their management capacity, play new roles, and assert their authority at the level of decision-making bodies.

◆ Restore the positive image of schools by involving them in large-scale community projects (sanitation and others).

◆ Ensure that successful examples of community participation are widely publicized.

Actions to improve access to basic education

◆ Conduct a broad awareness-raising campaign at the community level to encourage increased education of girls.

◆ Increase the number of female teachers in the primary cycle, especially in rural areas, and expand their involvement in the teaching of religion.

◆ Address perceptions of the status and roles of women, through awareness-raising implemented by local officials and educated women.

- Identify and combat cultural models that are hostile to educating children in general and certain children in particular (heirs apparent, eldest children), and combat child labor within agricultural and agro-industrial work.

- Reduce the financial cost to parents of their children's schooling, through:
  - increased commitment by the government, especially with respect to infrastructures;
  - analysis of schools' real equipment needs, in an effort to ensure that those needs are reflected in educational programs, to ensure that textbooks are more relevant to the curriculum, and to reduce unnecessary costs to parents.

Actions to improve the retention of students in the educational system

- Conduct an information campaign among parents regarding the functions of the school, so that they can target their contributions and expectations to those functions.

- Adjust the school year to suit specific circumstances in each region, notably in rural areas, to reduce seasonal conflicts between socio-economic activities and school.

- Have teaching staff and parents organize a universal monitoring system to supervise study time after school in the primary cycle.

- Develop a communications policy between teachers and parents, to encourage the exchange of information, resolve children's school problems, and improve the supervision of students outside school hours.

- Require schools to meet minimum standards for equipment.

- Reorganize the end of the primary cycle so children can learn job skills.

Actions to improve the quality of basic education

- Ensure that basic education content conforms to local and regional cultural, ecological, and religious realities, and develop appropriate teaching materials accordingly.

- Formulate policies to reinvigorate the practice of teaching, that create a career structure with intermediate levels (through passing competitive exams) between inspectors and ordinary teachers.

- Promote teachers' professional development by providing in-service training and refresher courses, strengthening and encouraging teaching staff, and creating "quality networks" among schools.

- Give preference to local people as teachers.

- Emphasize communities' participation in educational interventions, and in formulating and evaluating school management processes.
- Improve supervision of teachers by school principals and school inspectors.

Section I

Access and retention of students in Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia

Chapter 2

Côte d'Ivoire

Dadier Koffi
Kouakou Akjeï Koffi

1. Context of the study

Like several other African countries, Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory state to the Charter on Education adopted at the Addis Ababa Conference of 1961. It has also embraced the development priorities identified at the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien in 1990: to provide adult literacy and basic education, especially to women and children. Côte d'Ivoire has made a considerable effort to increase the literacy rate among its people and to ensure that all school-age children have access to primary education, having allocated 40 percent of the state operating budget to education during the 1970s. The goal of the country's official education policy has been to attain a 90 percent enrollment rate by the end of the millennium (MEN, 1993a).

Despite these efforts, the worsening of the country's economic situation during the 1980s and 1990s, combined with robust demographic growth and the adoption of a public-spending stabilization plan, led to a sizeable reduction in the portion of the national budget allocated to education (that portion fell to 34.6 percent of the budget in 1992—MEN, 1993a), the impoverishment of the population, a 50 percent reduction in the wages paid to new teachers recruited since 1991 and, consequently, a significant decrease in the enrollment rate (MEN, 1996). In rural areas, the fall in prices of agricultural products considerably reduced school investment and parents' ability to make a financial contribution toward the construction of new schools, leading to decreasing school construction rates and primary-school enrollments. Thus, the issues of access to primary education and of schools' student retention rates continue to represent unresolved challenges, which must be confronted. These two issues provide the main foci of our study.

2. *Issues*

The educational system in Côte d'Ivoire is in a state of imbalance, if not of crisis, characterized on the one hand by a level of demand that is driven by strong demographic growth (3.5 percent in 1992, among the highest in Africa) and on the other hand by an inadequate level of supply in the school system, due to shortages of infrastructure, equipment, and qualified human resources. This imbalance affects rural areas more than it does urban areas, while at the same time increasing the pressure exerted by the accelerated urbanization of the country on already vulnerable urban infrastructure (rate of urbanization estimated at 39 percent in 1988).

At a national level, the net school attendance rate, which reached 74.6 percent in 1988-89, fell to 50.2 percent in 1996 (MEN, 1996). This fall in the attendance rate has a greater impact on girls (the attendance rate for girls fell from 63.4 percent in 1992-93 to 43.8 percent in 1995-96) than on boys (the attendance rate for boys fell from 79.2 percent in 1992-93 to 57.2 percent in 1995-96). Children's enrollment rates in primary school, which had risen by an average of 7.2 percent per year up until the 1980s, have also fallen. In 1992, 70 percent of school-age children (6-11 years old) were enrolled in primary schools (MEN, 1993b). Since then, however, net enrollment rates for primary schools have fallen. This decline has occurred in the cities as much as in rural areas. In Abidjan, the net enrollment rate fell from 77.8 percent in 1992-1993 to 56.7 percent in 1995-1996. In rural areas, where enrollment rates are already lower, the rates range between 25 percent and 50 percent, depending on the region (MEN, 1993b).

The school construction rate has also declined, with the number of primary-school places falling since the mid-1980s (MEN, 1993a). There were 7,067 primary schools in 1992-93 (6,416 public schools and 651 private schools), with 33,350 primary-school classes, 1,463,963 students (1,316,905 in the public system and 147,058 in the private sector), 33,591 teachers and 2,661 assistant teachers (MEN, 1993a). The MEN estimated that during this period the average number of students per class was 43, and thus that there were 0.9 teachers per class. Côte d'Ivoire therefore still has a long way to go in terms of providing access to education.

The number of students dropping out and the number having to repeat grades are the major factors influencing retention rates in the primary school system. In 1982-83, one-fourth of students in primary schools were required to repeat a grade (20 percent of students enrolled in first grade (CP1)), while nearly 50 percent of students stayed in primary schools for 9 years instead of 6. This created significant bottlenecks, especially in sixth grade (CM2), because of the high failure rates for the examination for entry into secondary school. By sixth grade (CM2), 60 percent of girls and 55 percent of boys had been required to repeat a grade. Only a third of students in the final year of primary school went on to secondary school. Retention thus represents, alongside access, the second major problem of the country's educational system.

The challenges raised by the lack of access for and the poor retention of students in the primary-school system are so fundamental that they threaten the development of the entire educational system, in a country where 56.3 percent of people are less than 20 years of age. For political decision makers, the challenge is to ensure that national policy goals are reflected more accurately in the concrete educational resources offered to the people. For researchers, the challenge is not only to identify the constraints to full access to education nor to analyze the dysfunction within the system with respect to the retention of students in school, but also to provide decision makers with ideas for resolving the various problems identified.

The researchers of ERNWACA/Côte d'Ivoire therefore addressed the various factors that might influence the conditions governing access and retention of children in primary schools and also sought to identify possible solutions. This first exploratory study has succeeded in identifying some of the main problems involved, by means of a survey carried out among parents and teachers. It thus opens the way for future, more in-depth studies that are more directly targeted at these questions.

3. *Studies on access and retention in Africa*

Africa's educational systems are struggling to cope with internal and external problems that make it difficult to achieve the goals of expanding basic education and eliminating adult illiteracy. Those problems include: low student enrollment in some regions or countries, excess student enrollment in others, the inability of educational infrastructures to meet demand, inequity in student access, the role played by certain religious or cultural factors in parents' decisions about whether to enroll boys or girls, the low retention rate of students in the school system, the high rate of students having to repeat grades or dropping out, the inadequacy of financial resources, poor management of material and human resources, and poor teaching.

For many years, research has concentrated solely on the problem of access to education, which is generally defined according to the rate at which educational facilities grow and expand to meet increasing school enrollment rates among a given population. The most widely used indicator for determining school enrollment levels remains the number of students enrolled in the educational system. In this respect, researchers have identified a gross enrollment rate at the primary-school level of around 78 percent in Africa (Smyth, 1982), as well as a significant disparity between African countries, with the lowest rates being in Gambia (Sonko, 1985), Tanzania (Sago, 1984), and Ghana (Collinson, 1985; Bledge et al, 1986).

The factors most commonly identified as favorable to improved access to education are free schooling, the number of library books per school, mandatory schooling, the proximity of school buildings, the number of places available in schools, and free meals. On the other hand, constraints to access are generally thought to be linked entirely to socio-economic factors, certain cultural practices, students' having to repeat grades, and poor management of costs and expenditure in some schools or regions (Smyth, 1982). For sociocultural, socio-psychological, and economic reasons, girls constitute the most disadvantaged group with regard to access and retention within the school system (Bouya, 1993; Tchombe, 1993; Diallo, 1993; Mbanefon, 1993; Kainja and Chikhungu, 1993).

This access-focused approach is inadequate if it does not also take into account conditions governing the retention rate of students in the school system—that is, the rate at which students are retained in schools until they graduate from the primary level (King, 1992; Lockheed et al, 1990). It seemed that the necessary first step for studies targeted more specifically at the various obstacles identified was for the main actors (parents and teachers) to define the problems related to access and retention within the school system and suggest solutions to these issues. No study carried out in Côte d'Ivoire has focused on these two dimensions of schooling. Researchers have mostly dwelt either on the general evolution of teaching in the country (Desalmand, 1983)—sometimes establishing links with types of families or social problems within Côte d'Ivoire society (Dedy and Tape, 1995)—or on the education of girls (Tape and Bih, 1996).

4. Methodology

We have tried to describe all the potential problems and solutions regarding the recruitment of students into primary schools and their promotion through the school system, as defined by two groups of participants who are in direct contact with students. More specifically, the study attempts to answer two basic questions:

1) What are the main factors favoring or impeding children's access to education and the retention of students in primary schools?
2) What solutions are proposed by students' parents and by primary school teachers to improve conditions for access and retention of students in primary schools?

a. Analytical model and definition of variables

Based on analysis of the relevant literature and a qualitative pre-survey phase, researchers focussed on two types of factors related to the issues of access and retention. These factors were analyzed using data collected from respondents. The first factor has a psychosocial dimension, and considered the sociocultural factors revealed through the attitudes, expectations, and ambitions of parents with regard to the schooling of children. The second factor type has a socio-economic dimension, and addressed the material conditions that are favorable or unfavorable to access and retention of students in primary schools (financial resources of parents, school fees, the student's living and working conditions, and resources available within the system itself, in terms of educational facilities, teaching materials, or human resources). These factors were analyzed according to several variables: the sex of the child, parents' level of education, parents' socio-professional category, religion, ethnicity, and environment (urban or rural). The study thus attempts to measure the impact of sociocultural and socio-economic factors, as well as that of community participation, on student access and retention in primary schools.

For the purposes of this study, the **reasons** for educating children refer to those factors that motivate (or have motivated) parents to enroll their children in school. The **expectations** of parents with regard to school are their opinions about the functions allotted to the schools. **Ambitions** refer to the level of schooling that parents hope their children will attain.

Moreover, **access** to basic education is measured in terms of the availability of educational infrastructures and the demand for education. It is generally expressed in terms of recruitment rates, and is a quantitative variable, based on relationships of scale. It involves comparison of several indicators, notably educational facilities (schools, classes, places), the number of school-age children (between 6 and 15 years old) and the number of children effectively enrolled in first grade (CP1). These indicators are not absolutely accurate, since it is possible to encounter situations where not enough places exist for the number of school-age children, but the number of children enrolled is too low to fill the available places.

Retention refers to the promotion of students in the primary-school system. It is called "progressive" when students go through the system without having to repeat a grade, and "static" when students do have to repeat grades, and "incomplete" when students are expelled or drop out of school. Retention is a quantitative variable with results based on relationships of scale. A progressive retention rate is measured in terms of the relationships between the size of a class of students when it begins first grade and its size, five years later, in sixth grade (CM2). This definition establishes a relationship between several indicators, which may be measured at each level, or at the end of the primary grades: the effective number going on to higher grades, the number having to repeat grades, and the number of students expelled. The study also includes field observations regarding the "teaching situation," which constitutes a qualitative indicator of retention.

b. The population sample

Our study covered three sites in Côte d'Ivoire: the town of Yopougon (a suburb to the north of Abidjan), which is characterized by cultural diversity, a fairly well-developed school system, and a wide range of economic activity; the sub-prefecture of Akoupé (in the east of the country), where agriculture and schooling are both at a developed stage; and the sub-prefecture of Niakaramadougou (north-central), which is less advanced, both in economic terms and in terms of schooling. These three sites were chosen because they present contrasting social, cultural, and economic situations, and are thus, to a certain degree, representative of the country as a whole.

We used a system combining stratified and random cluster sampling, based on the list of census districts used for the 1988 National Census of People and Households. The strata corresponded to each geographical area (or site). Within each stratum, researchers made random selections, first from among households with children of school age (6-15 years old), then from among parents, who were divided into three categories: those who sent all their children to school, those who sent only one child to school, and those who sent no children to school. The theoretical size of the sample was estimated to be 1,268 subjects, with a margin of error of 10 percent. The teacher questionnaires were distributed to all teachers, of both sexes, who were in charge of a class and worked in primary schools within the research sites.

Altogether, researchers gathered data, via a questionnaire, from 1,332 parents and 184 teachers, at three sites: 442 parents (33.2%) and 50 teachers (27.2%) at the Abidjan site; 452 parents (33.9%) and 83 teachers (45.1%) at the Akoupé site; and 438 parents (32.9%) and 51 teachers (27.7%) at the Niakara site. Eighteen class observations (six per site) were also carried out in all primary-school grades (CP1 to CM2), in mathematics, grammar, or language classes, which were likely to facilitate interaction between students and teachers. Semi-directive interviews on the practice of teaching were carried out with six teachers per site (18 in total) following class observations.

c. Data collection and analysis

Our survey combined qualitative and quantitative techniques. The first stage in the data-collection process was to review previous literature on the subject, in order to construct the different methodological tools needed to conduct an empirical study. A qualitative pre-survey phase was then conducted at each site, in the form of individual interviews and focus groups. The purpose of this phase was to fine-tune our questionnaires and observation-grids. The next stage in our qualitative research involved the use of analytical and random survey techniques (interviews and class observations). On the quantitative side, researchers opted for a comparative approach, using tests and questionnaires. Six survey tools were constructed: an interview guide, which functioned as a pre-test exercise, a questionnaire for parents, a questionnaire for teachers, an individual interview guide for teachers, a specific grid for class observations, and an analytical grid for quantitative data.

In terms of quantitative techniques, the parent questionnaires produced two broad categories of data:

- descriptive-type data, designed to show the characteristics of the group surveyed: professional status; level of education; the child's gender; ethnic origin; place of residence; and religion;
- opinion-type data: the reasons cited for educating children; expectations and ambitions regarding schooling; how parents participate in the school; and suggested solutions for improving access or retention.

Similarly, the teacher questionnaires produced the following data:

- descriptive-type data: position occupied; gender; teaching establishment; age; number of years in teaching; and class (grade) taught;
- opinion-type data: teachers' opinions on the attitude of parents toward educating children (according to the religion, ethnicity, and gender of the child); on community participation and parents' financial contribution toward the education of their children; on children's attitudes toward school and the reasons for being educated; on parents' criticisms of the school; on students' living and working conditions; and their suggested solutions for improving access and retention of children at school.

Qualitative techniques involved classroom observations and semi-directive interviews with teachers after classes, with a view to construct an objective picture of the "teaching" situation, by eliciting information on the material working conditions of teachers, the relationships between teachers and students, teaching expertise, and classroom activities.

Content analysis of the qualitative data made it possible, notably, to relate the teaching situation to the behavior of students, their schooling, and their school results. Quantitative data were entered into the computer using the *Clipper 5.0* program, and were then processed with the *Epi Info* software. The statistical analysis tools consisted of univariate analysis (for frequencies), bivariate analysis (for studying the relationships between variables), and multivariate analysis (for explanatory purposes).

5. *Results*

a. Quantitative data drawn from the teacher survey

Parents: characteristics of the sample

The parents surveyed were categorized according to specific "reference children." Of these children, 55.4 percent were boys and 44.6 percent were girls. They were enrolled in all primary-school classes, in proportions that were broadly similar, ranging from 11.9 percent to 20.8 percent. Although the age bracket was 6-15, the average age of the children was 10. The age disparities were, however, significant from one grade to another: in first grade (CP1), for example, 45.8 percent of children were 6 years old, 33.3 percent were 7 years old, 16.7 percent were 8 years old, and 4.2 percent were 10 years old. Furthermore, boys spent more years in school than girls did and, except for second (CP2) and third grades (CE1), the grade-repetition rate was higher among girls than among boys during the other four years of primary schooling.

Parents who sent all their children to school made up 49.3 percent of the sample, while 28.2 percent sent one child to school, and 22.5 percent sent no children to school. Of those questioned, 43.8 percent were women and 56.2 percent were men. Their average age overall was 40. At each site, the number of people surveyed was largely the same: 33 percent on average. Students lived with their father and/or mother in 87.2 percent of cases, and the average number of siblings in each family was 5.

The parents surveyed were mostly Christian (51%, against 23% Muslims, and 25% animists) and members of ethnic groups originating from the survey sites: Akan (36%) at the Akoupé and Abidjan sites, and Gour (43%) at the Niakara site.

Of the parents surveyed, 48.4 percent had themselves attended school. Around 1 percent had attended primary school only (first to sixth grades), 76 percent had reached middle school (covering seventh to tenth grades), 18 percent had reached high school (covering eleventh to thirteenth grades), while 4 percent had attained a more advanced level. More than 72 percent said they had been forced to drop out of school, for financial reasons in nearly 80 percent of cases. With regard to socio-professional categories, the parents in our sample were mostly farmers (43%), followed by manual laborers (16.4%), traders (14%), housewives (12.7%), supervisors (6%), middle managers (2.2%), unemployed people (3%), retirees (2%), and senior managers (1%). Fifty percent of salaried workers and 98 percent of non-salaried workers (that is, most of the farmers, traders, housewives, and unemployed people) earned a monthly income below 100,000 CFA francs.

Sociocultural factors influencing the enrollment of children

Gender of the child: The reasons given for educating girls are generally related to success at school (63.5%), while for boys the reasons are more varied: success at school (35.3%), access to paid work (21.6%), and moral obligation (20.9%).

Religion and ethnicity: At all sites, parents' opinions about educating girls and boys do not indicate disparities according to ethnic origin or religion, except among Muslims, who are more in favor of educating boys.

Parents' professions and educational levels: Regardless of parents' socio-professional status, the general trend was for them to favor providing equal education to both sexes. However, those who had not themselves attended school were more in favor of educating girls (50.1%) than were those who had attended school (40.3%).

General and personal reasons: Across all socio-professional categories, the personal reason most often cited for educating children (to a degree similar for both sexes) was "positive action," followed closely by "good opportunity to train," and "social success." The "fear of emancipation" is cited as an constraint to girls' education (especially among middle managers, traders, the unemployed, and retirees), but never in the case of boys.

The expectations of all parents with regard to school are primarily "professional": they see school as a place to learn a profession (43.3%), which they associate with the acquisition of knowledge (34.8%). These views are broadly similar at all sites and across all socio-professional categories. Furthermore, the expectations of educated and uneducated parents are very similar, even though educated parents do tend to have slightly higher expectations than other parents with regard to the acquisition of knowledge.

Christians believe that educating girls offers a guarantee for the future (62.7%), a good way of achieving social success (55.7%), and a future help to the family (51.3%). Even though most Christians believe that school offers a good training opportunity, some fear it, because of its potential to emancipate girls. As for Muslims and animists, their reasons are largely the same, except that animists are more inclined to hope for help from the educated child in future, and that Muslims regard school primarily as a guarantee for the future.

Parents' ambitions with regard to children's education are high: most parents want their children (boys and girls) to reach high school or go on to advanced level studies. This is especially the case in Abidjan. Few parents believe that their child will finish his or her studies at the primary or middle-school level. However, some parents say that this factor "depends on the motivation and intellectual abilities" of the child (especially at Akoupé and Niakara), or say that the child must "go as far as possible" (especially at Akoupé), but do not state a particular grade that should be reached. With respect to the various socio-professional categories, different opinions emerged regarding the desired school level (for girls as well as for boys): manual laborers believe more strongly that the desired grade is the primary school and, to a lesser extent, the middle school or the advanced level; farmers believe that the high school is the desired level; while senior managers and supervisors mostly opt for advanced studies.

Socio-economic factors and community participation

Students' living and working conditions: Students attending a school in their local district or village make up 89.2 percent of the total. Those attending a school in a more remote location do so because they know a teacher elsewhere (22.9%), because there is no school close to their homes (17.1%), or because the local school is not considered to be as good (17.1%). The inadequacy of schools is also cited (14.3%). In general, 86.2 percent of students attend a school located one kilometer or less from their homes. Students walking to school make up 95 percent of the total, while 88.6 percent eat at home. More than 85 percent eat three meals per day. Almost fifty-nine percent of parents say that their children are supervised during homework and lessons. Children are helped by a tutor (36.4%), an older sibling (29.9%), or a parent (19.1%). They study either in the living-room (59.6%) or in a corner of the house—terrace, courtyard, or other (30.6%). Overall, 84 percent devote between one and two hours per day to schoolwork.

Prospects for children having problems at school: A significant number of parents believe that children expelled before sixth grade (CM2) should learn a trade, especially an agricultural trade. The prospects suggested vary, however, according to the parent's socio-professional status. Parents who are manual laborers, farmers, and traders believe, in proportions ranging from 10 to 44 percent, that another school should be found. An agricultural trade is suggested by 87.7 percent of farming parents. When a child drops out of school voluntarily, parents believe (in order of importance) that the child must enter active life, that the child leaves because he or she is unaware of the implications, and that the child must be motivated to continue his or her studies.

Religion and attitudes toward the building of schools: Parents who say that they participate in the building of schools in their village or local district make up 65.7 percent of the total, and those who participate through their religious communities make up 24.6 percent of cases. Muslims have made a greater contribution toward the building of Koranic schools (32.9%) than Christians (27.4%) to private religious schools. However, religious communities have participated in building public schools in a proportion of 24.5 percent, not to mention the fact that 15.2 percent of parents have contributed to the building of Koranic and public schools.

Community participation in the construction of schools: In general, the parents' contributions toward the construction of a village or local school are mostly of a financial nature (52.1%), or of a financial and physical nature (30.2%). Parents participate mainly to encourage their children to succeed in school, to participate in the development of the village, to keep students at the school, or to obey the orders of the village chief. Conversely, non-participation is justified by the following reasons: facilities already built by State or Church, lack of financial resources, lack of motivation or organization on the part of students' parents.

Cost of schooling: Parents pay an average 1,737.68 CFA francs per annum to enroll their children in school, in 77.8 percent of cases. Of this sum, 51.1 percent goes toward school maintenance (including 37 percent for the construction of classes and school fences) and 21.8 percent toward the construction and maintenance of teachers' homes. Overall, however, 46 percent of parents do not know what the money they contribute is effectively used for. Parents estimate that the total expenditure required for educating a child is 26,066 CFA francs per year, including 17,089 CFA francs for school supplies and 6,952 CFA francs for uniforms. Almost all parents, regardless of their own level of education, and regardless of socio-professional category or site, consider these amounts to be either very high (76.5%) or high (19.7%). Parents with a primary, middle school, or high school education, however, find these sums higher than those who went on to take advanced-level studies. This is the case across all study sites.

The main reasons cited by parents who have not sent their children to school are lack of financial resources (34.8%), the fact that the child attends a Koranic school (18.9%), parents' negligence (10%), and children's domestic chores (8.8%).

Parents' recommendations

Parental motivation: The most common motivations for parents to enroll their children in schools are, first, "to educate children," and second, "job-relevant training." "Free tuition" comes only in third place, together with the desire "to complete family education."

Table 1: Reasons why parents enroll their children in school

	Order of preference (%)		
Reason	1st	2nd	3rd
To educate	33.1	20.5	0.5
To improve teaching quality	17.3	1.3	0
To complete family education	14.2	10.6	0.5
To ensure social success	7.0	12.6	4.3
Free tuition	9.8	2.4	1.4
Job-relevant training	7.5	20.6	15.9
To complete family education and free tuition	1.6	6.8	17.8
To educate and free tutition	1.1	7.7	13.0

These motivations retain the same order of preference when one takes into account the school grade (from first to sixth (CP1 to CM2)) attained by the students or the sex of the child. However, in the case of uneducated parents, free schooling becomes a more important motivation. The most highly educated parents give greater importance to "social success" and "job-relevant training." This order does not vary significantly with respect to parents' socio-professional category, except among the unemployed, housewives, and farmers, who are more inclined to expect free schooling.

With regard to religion, the survey revealed a number of differences between the different groups. Christians and animists say that "to educate" is more important, while Muslims believe that it is free schooling that plays a greater role in encouraging the enrollment of children in school. Christians and Muslims cite the job-relevant training as the second most important factor.

Increasing access to school: Parents made four main recommendations for increasing access to school. These recommended actions do not differ greatly in terms of the student's grade level, except with respect to the reduction of school fees, which is of greater concern to parents with students in first grade (CP1) (60%) and second grade (CP2) (57%).

Table 2: Parents' recommendations for increasing children's access to schools

	Order of preference (%)		
Recommendation	1st	2nd	3rd
Build schools	37.9	22.2	24.2
Increase parents' awareness	9.8	4.9	2.8
Reduce school fees	45.0	63.3	47.6
Create jobs	1.9	5.7	11.7

Parents' level of education influences the type of action to be carried out: educated parents favor building schools (50%) and reducing school fees (40.2%), while for uneducated parents, reducing school fees (63.9%) remains the key factor in increasing access to school. Moreover, with regard to socio-professional status, farmers believe that reducing school fees would be virtually the only measure required to promote access; manual workers and housewives favor reducing school fees and building schools; middle managers favor making parents more aware; and lastly, the other employment categories favor building schools. Irrespective of parents' religion, reducing school fees and building schools remain the two most important actions. The gender of the child has no influence on parental preferences.

Improving school success: Parents see continuous schooling as the most important factor in children's success (60.6%). This is the case regardless of parents' level of education or professional status. On the other hand, parents consider continuous schooling as more important to girls' success at school (70.6%) than to boys' success (63.6%).

Table 3: Parents' recommendations for promoting children's success at school

	Order of preference (%)		
Recommendation	1st	2nd	3rd
Continuous schooling	60.6	11.4	10.2
Purchase of supplies	5.6	14.5	17.2
Teachers' diligence	2.1	9.1	11.7
Motivation of students	4.5	8.8	11.7
Beliefs	7.8	7.8	5.5
Student health	2.0	7.0	7.0
Parent-teacher collaboration	1.0	3.5	6.3

b. Quantitative data drawn from the teacher survey

The teachers: characteristics of the sample

Of the 184 teachers surveyed, 50 were from the Abidjan site, 83 from Akoupé, and 51 from Niakara. They were mostly men (91.2%), with an average age of 36 and an average of 16 years' professional experience. They were mostly teachers (139, or 77.7%), principals (24, or 13.4 %) or both (16, or 8.9%). More than 96 percent were teachers and 3.7 percent were assistant teachers. At the time of the survey, most were teaching in the higher primary grades. However, on average they had spent two years in each primary-school grade during their careers.

Sociocultural factors

Religion and ethnicity: Teachers believe that religion constitutes an important factor in parents' decision to educate their children. Overall, Christians are thought to be the religious group most in favor of educating children, with 67.8 percent of teachers believing that Christians are very favorable to the education of boys and 71.7 percent believing that they are very favorable to the education of girls. Whereas 84.6 percent of teachers believe that Muslims are against educating boys, 78.9 percent believe that they are against educating girls. Ethnic origin is also considered to have an impact on children's education. More than 51 percent of teachers believe that the Akan are very favorable to educating boys and more than 60 percent believe that they are favorable to educating girls. The Gour are thought to be a little less favorable to educating both sexes, while the Mandé are thought to be hardly in favor of this at all.

Students' image and perception of school: Seventy-nine percent of teachers believe that students approve of school, primarily as a way to learn and to succeed (27.9%), or because of the kind of job they can secure (27.9%), or both (10.4%). Those who believe that students do not like school cite parental negligence (11%), the restrictive nature of school (6.4%), or the lack of student motivation (5.2%). Akoupé had the highest number of teachers who believe that children do not like school: 60.5 percent compared with 18.4 percent for Abidjan and 21.1 percent for Niakara.

Socio-economic factors and community participation

Religion and attitudes toward building schools: Fifty percent of teachers believe that religious communities are actively involved in the construction of schools, while the other half holds the opposite view. Among those who believe that religious communities are involved, 91.6 percent believe that Christians are more involved than other communities. Almost 80 percent of teachers think that students' parents contribute toward the construction of schools, even if in a somewhat sporadic fashion (57.7%), and 71.3 percent of teachers believe that village communities contribute toward the construction of teachers' homes—a contribution that is primarily financial (60.5%), linked to the performance of tasks (9.5%), to material support (5.4%), or to all three (7.5%).

Community participation in the construction of schools: Most teachers (83.9%) say that they do not contribute to the construction of the homes intended for them. However, they say that they do help to maintain the schools or to improve school amenities, a contribution expressed mainly through the performance of physical tasks (52%) or through financial contributions (20%).

Infrastructures and students' living conditions: Over half of teachers believe that not enough places are available in the schools for all eligible students. This view is more widely held in Akoupé (61.5%) than in Abidjan (27.5%) or in Niakara (11%). Teachers also think that students attend schools located outside their village or district, mainly due to the absence of a school in their village or district (40.3%), crowded classes (33.9%), good quality teaching (15.6%), birth certificate (3.6%), or because children are expelled (3.5%). They believe that students travel between 1 and 4 kilometers to attend school, in 80 percent of cases on foot. Lastly, around 75 percent of teachers say that students are often sick for short periods.

Cost of schooling: Teachers believe, in 68.4 percent of cases, that parents should pay school fees when enrolling their children in school. These fees are higher for new students than for returning students, higher for non-native students than for native students, and lower for teachers' children. Teachers say that children's enrollment fees pay for the construction and maintenance of schools in 63.1 percent of cases, with variations, depending on the site: 45.8 percent in Abidjan, 79.5 percent in Akoupé and 53.8 percent in Niakara. According to teachers, the other main uses are insurance and school cooperatives (11.6%) and parents' associations (11%). People's ideas about how the money is used vary from one site to another, but comparison of the sites shows that teachers at the Abidjan site know more about how enrollment fees are used.

Teachers believe that parents spend an average of 16,730 CFA francs per year on school supplies for each student. They say that only around 12 percent of parents pay between 81 and 100 percent of this financial obligation, 28 percent between 61 and 80 percent, 26 percent between 41 and 60 percent and 34 percent between 1 and 40 percent. This suggests that over half of parents therefore do not pay the amounts needed to purchase school supplies. This trend appears to be stronger in Niakara (where 53% say that parents purchase less than 40% of supplies) and in Abidjan, but weaker in Akoupé.

The expenditure required of students' parents is considered too high by 40.2 percent of teachers and high by 45.4 percent. However, school maintenance is considered necessary by 77.5 percent of teachers, and 95 percent of teachers say that parents' school expenditure can be cut, notably by cutting the range and cost of school materials (87.5%) and through free schooling (11%).

Parents' image and perception of school: Teachers say that parents' main criticisms of school concern material or financial matters. The high cost of sending children to school is thus the criticism most commonly made at all sites, followed by the inadequacy of infrastructures and teaching personnel. However, the criticism of high costs is more common in rural, and thus poorer areas (Niakara) than in urban areas (Abidjan). In Abidjan, teachers believe that parents are more concerned about the fall in teaching standards. Note that 38 percent of teachers say they know of a case where a child has been forced to drop out of school because of a lack of school supplies.

Schoolwork: Teachers give homework in 85 percent of cases, but this work is completely done (or done to a degree between 76 and 100%) by only around 19 percent of students, mainly because such students want to do well in life. Teachers say that those students who do only part of their homework lack supervision, while those who do not do any of their homework suffer from poor working conditions and show negative attitudes toward work.

Teachers' recommendations

Improving school facilities: Teachers believe that four main actions influence the improvement of school facilities: school maintenance, the construction of new classes, the installation of school canteens, and school management. Financial support from the State and the Commune is not considered one of the more important factors, regardless of the site. On the other hand, in Abidjan and Niakara, priority is given to school maintenance, while in Akoupé, priority is given to the construction of new schools.

Table 4: Recommendations for improving school facilities

	Order of preference (%)		
Recommendation	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**
School maintenance	30.0	22.9	26.1
Construction of new classes	24.4	16.7	12.6
Providing equipment for schools	6.3	16.0	12.6
Installing school canteens	12.5	11.8	14.4
State and Commune financial support	5.6	9.7	9.9
Fees paid by students' parents	8.1	6.3	7.2
School management	10.0	12.5	12.6
Others	3.2	4.2	4.5

Lastly, teachers at all sites surveyed would like to see school canteens installed and would like to organize school management.

Improving school results: The key factor in determining success at school is meeting the needs of the student. This is recognized as a priority by all teachers, regardless of the site.

Table 5: Recommendations for improving students' school results

Recommendation	Order of preference (%) 1st	2nd	3rd
Meet students' needs	61.5	68.3	51.8
Improve teachers' conditions, discipline, and professional awareness	15.5	17.3	24.1
Construction of new schools	7.7	6.2	5.1
Parent-teacher collaboration	14.8	7.5	18.2
Others	0.6	0.6	0.7

Improving the image of the school: In general, teachers believe it is possible to improve the image of the school among parents through parent-teacher collaboration (26.3%) and through discipline and teacher professionalism (20.4%).

Table 6: Recommendations for improving parents' image of schools

Recommendation	Order of preference (%) 1st	2nd	3rd
Discipline and teacher professionalism	20.4	19.3	7.8
Student motivation	4.0	5.2	8.7
Reduction in school fees	6.6	5.2	3.9
Reduction in failure rates	14.5	7.4	5.8
Sensitization of parents, cooperation	26.3	30.4	46.6
Job-relevant training	4.6	5.9	1.9
Sociocultural activities in schools	2.6	5.9	9.7
Student safety	0.7	3.0	2.9
School maintenance	15.8	13.3	7.8
Others	34.0	2.2	2.9

Even if teachers generally believe that student safety has little importance in terms of improving the image of schools, different sites do appear to hold differing views as to the most effective actions. Thus, teachers' discipline and professionalism occupy first place in Abidjan (26.8%), sensitization of parents occupies first place in Akoupé (32.3%), and the reduction in the failure rate occupies first place in Niakara (26.1%). Similarly, job-relevant training seems fairly important in Niakara (10.9%), while it is virtually absent at other sites.

c. Qualitative data drawn from teachers and from class observations

The data drawn from class observations and teacher interviews reveal the following:

- Class sizes vary between 29 and 65 students—45 students on average. As a result, these classes are difficult to control. It is hard to apply active teaching methods, and hard to supervise students. Sixth grade (CM2) classes often have 60 students, mainly because students must repeat grades.
- There is a shortage of teaching materials in all grades. Apart from chalk and a blackboard, teachers and students have no other working tools. The blackboard is used on an almost systematic basis. Researchers believe that this material is not enough to ensure an effective learning environment.
- In general, three students have to sit on benches designed for only two students.
- Teachers ask more group questions than individual questions. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the level of knowledge acquired by each student. Teachers exert good control over the teaching aspect of their classes and over students' individual participation.
- Little incentive exists for students to work as a group. Students either confront their problems alone, or must count on the teacher-student relationship to resolve their problems. No attempt is made to encourage stronger and weaker students to work together, and this creates divisions. The absence of multilateral relations raises the possibility that students with problems may be marginalized.
- Due to the shortages of equipment, teachers use few written materials and depend heavily on auditory memory. This can make it hard to retain knowledge, especially when it comes to learning grammatical or mathematical rules.
- Initiatives come from teachers, with students being limited to the role of carrying out orders. They generally act under conditions determined by the teacher.
- Material conditions, combined with teachers' shortcomings in the area of communication, are sometimes responsible for students' failures, repeated grades, and expulsions.
- The often excessive class sizes can negatively influence school performance, for example students chatter in class, lack discipline, and have difficulty in concentrating.
- Teachers are not always fully conversant with the teaching methods used, indicating either insufficient training or the absence of in-service training opportunities. They would, however, like to have access to in-service training and the appropriate materials for preparing classes.
- According to teachers, the criterion to evaluate the accomplishment of objectives is whether most students succeed in applied exercises. Those who have problems are isolated and thus develop gaps in their learning, which causes them to repeat grades.

6. *Analysis of results*

In general, the survey results show that one single factor cannot easily explain students' level of access to school or the rate at which they drop out of school. The combination of certain factors can, under certain conditions, produce an "explosive" situation. With regard to access, for example, the results indicate that educated parents who are Christian and in a high socio-professional category are more in favor of sending their children to school, regardless of the child's sex, and regardless of how high school fees are. Another combination might have the opposite effect, in terms of both access and retention.

In the same way, by combining the results obtained from teachers and parents, it is possible to draw the following picture, with regard to those factors helping to:

- increase students' access to school: the construction of new schools or new classrooms, maintained, with reduced school fees or no fees at all;
- increase students' success at school: satisfaction of students' needs and continuous schooling;
- improve parents' perception of school and encourage the enrollment of children in schools: making parents aware of the advantages and benefits of sending children to school, collaboration between teachers and parents to educate children, and making parents aware of teachers' discipline and professionalism.

Other factors can influence access and retention, although researchers did not discuss them with parents. These notably include political factors, such as the adoption of a law or public regulation as a solution to certain problems. Moreover, combinations of factors, such as those described above in the case of parents, are not always possible. The results do not always make it possible to compare the reasons given at the different sites, and this makes it hard to determine the strengths and weaknesses of one site compared with another, their specific needs, or how effectively they use available resources. Our survey did not take a systemic approach, approaching access and retention of students within the school system as the product of interaction between the various actors involved or concerned: school authorities, students, village leaders, elected officials, education officers, parents, teachers, and education researchers. Nonetheless, the data collected do make it possible to target pertinent questions more effectively, in order to carry out detailed research on the subject.

a. *Factors linked to access*

Sociocultural and socio-economic factors favorable to access

Parents are generally in favor of sending their children to school. They have a positive image of school, and their attitude seems to have changed positively, especially with regard to girls. Parents surveyed believe that girls have the same opportunities for success as boys do, but whereas the main reason parents give for sending girls to school is to give them a chance to succeed in life, they feel a moral obligation to educate boys. The sex of the child does not, in itself, constitute an obstacle to education.

Whereas the main reason why educated parents seek to send their children to school is to educate them, uneducated parents say that free schooling is the main incentive for sending their children to school. In general, however, the education given to the child and improvements in teaching quality are the two main incentives for parents to send their children to school.

The large majority of parents believe that school allows children to learn a profession and to acquire knowledge. This suggests that parents have a positive and realistic attitude toward school. Moreover, parents are involved in the building of school infrastructures. They assume financial burdens related to the education of their children, but consider those burdens to be very high. Also, they would want their children to pursue their studies in the case of difficult family circumstances, such as the death of their parents. Moreover, teachers believe that children do like school, except in the Akoupé sub-prefecture, where two-thirds of children are said not to like school, but where, curiously, schooling is more developed than in Niakara. Overall, attitudes indicate that circumstances favor an increase in access in Côte d'Ivoire.

Socio-economic and sociocultural factors unfavorable to access

At all sites (but especially in rural areas) parents and teachers believe that school fees are very high and represent an obstacle to the education of their children. Parents of children who do not attend school also explain their own children's difficulties with gaining access to school in terms of their lack of financial resources. Moreover, certain school supplies are seen as unnecessary and inadequate with respect to the school program. Thus, certain Muslim parents choose to enroll their children in a Koranic school, which costs less in terms of enrolment and school materials.

Uneducated parents tend to give precedence to the education of boys, because of the role played by boys within the family. It is the boy who inherits the parents' assets in the case of their death.

Teachers believe that students attend schools outside their village or local district in approximately 3 cases out of 4, because of problems with school infrastructures (absence of a school or overloaded classes). Respondents' opinions differ as to how this problem affects students: for parents, a small minority of children must travel more than one kilometer to school, while teachers say that over half of children must make such journeys. On the other hand, teachers are almost unanimous in recognizing that these long journeys are not among the reasons why students drop out of school, even though such journeys may negatively impact access and retention. Both teachers and parents say that access to school would be easier if new schools were built.

b. Factors linked to retention

Sociocultural and socio-economic factors favorable to retention

Most parents would prefer that children who fail the examination for entry into sixth grade continue their studies by learning a profession. This attitude reflects parents' concern that children remain at school.

Parents are ambitious for their children. They mostly expect that their children will continue their studies as far as possible. Parents in Abidjan hope, more than other parents, that their children will go on to advanced studies. The urban environment explains the extent of parents' ambitions (more information, proximity of decision-making centers, more opportunities, etc.). However, it should be possible to determine whether urban environments offer a framework that effectively favors advanced studies, and what its impact is in relation to other factors.

Parents associate success at school with the need to continue at school. Thus, they are aware of the link between school results and the quality of teaching. Moreover, in several places, children eat their meals in the school canteen. Teachers believe that this offers a solution to one of students' many difficulties.

Socio-economic and sociocultural factors unfavorable to retention

Respondents differ as to the main reasons why students drop out of school. Teachers say that students drop out of school mainly because they lack the necessary school supplies (although this view varies, depending on the site). Parents say that children drop out either because it is time for them to enter into active life or simply because they are unaware of the implications of their decision. However, these respondents recognize the importance of responding to the needs of the student, providing an educational environment for the child, and motivating the child (although here, too, differences emerge, depending on the religion, ethnic origin, location, or socio-professional status of the parent). Specific studies on why students drop out of school, using a different methodological approach, based for example on a comparison of different "life histories" at the various sites, should help to provide a better understanding of the problem and the combined effects of the different factors.

The results indicate significant delays in children's school careers, generally due to the repetition of grades. Although the preparatory grades are intended for children between 6 and 10 years old, children age 14 and 15 are also found in the final primary-school grades. The explanations most often given are: the students' personal abilities and parents' financial problems. However, class observations indicate that the methods used by the teacher may have a significant impact in terms of whether or not children are motivated to pursue their studies or whether they are able to resolve the problems confronting them during their school careers.

Parents do have certain expectations as to what should happen in the event that their children are expelled or fail their examinations. At the rural site of Niakara, parents do not expect that a child expelled before sixth grade (CM2) will be retained at school, primarily because few other schools exist in which to enroll their children. In rural areas, farming parents prefer that such children take up agricultural work, rather than wait to see what may or may not transpire with their schooling. These parents will not encourage an expelled child to remain at school, while parents who are senior managers, for example, will adopt a strategy based on the motivation of the child. Other socio-professional categories tend to favor steering the child toward a vocational apprenticeship. Parents expressed concerns about the relevance of school programs, about how educated children can integrate into society, and about high school fees. The survey did not, however, offer a satisfactory explanation as to the causes and essential nature of such concerns.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

a. Conclusions

The present study is the first exploratory survey of its kind conducted with parents and teachers in Côte d'Ivoire and serves to fill a significant gap in our knowledge. The study allowed us to gather a range of opinions and perceptive data, from two categories of participants, concerning those factors that might facilitate or impede access and retention of students in primary schools. The study also revealed the solutions recommended by these two categories of participants to the problems that they have perceived and described. In so doing, the study opens the way to fruitful research that will make it possible, on the one hand, to explore in greater detail certain contradictory assessments made with regard to the same situation, and on the other hand to validate those perceptions and opinions by comparing them with the "hard" data derived from the research team's operational definition of access and retention.

Access and retention were defined as a measure of the relationship between all the resources and opportunities for schooling and retention that are offered by the educational system, on the one hand, and the real or potential demand for schooling among the population of school-age children, on the other. Moreover, the study tried to answer two major questions: a) What are the main factors facilitating or impeding children's access to education and the retention of students in primary schools? b) What solutions are recommended by students' parents and by teachers in primary schools to improve conditions for access and the retention of students in primary schools? The study did not provide a definitive answer to either question.

A rigorous response to the first research question will require complementary research designed to establish a clear picture of students' actual experience with education, based on adequate statistical information concerning, for example, the amount of school materials per school or per grade, the number of students, where they live, the number of cafeterias, school fees, and how parents' fees are used. Such research should also seek to compare statistical information with parents' and teachers' perceptions of specific socio-economic and sociocultural situations, factors, or conditions. These perceptions provide useful information about factors that are favorable or unfavorable to access and retention. In order to answer the first research question adequately, other complementary studies must also relate these factors more closely to one another, in order to target the concrete situations in which several different factors either accumulate or cancel each other out, and to be able to provide a more accurate assessment of the impact of each factor on students' actual educational experience.

With regard to the second question, it may be said that the results obtained also open interesting paths toward further research into, for example, actions already undertaken in certain contexts and their effective impact. This highlights the importance of the role that the State must play in order to: (i) support such complementary studies; (ii) make parents and teachers aware of the results obtained by means of such studies; and (iii) involve them in an active process of searching for solutions to the problems related to education.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that the starting point for any intervention involving human beings in a process of change lies in the objectivation of participants' perceptions, expectations, and attitudes toward a situation that is regarded as problematic. This is the most significant contribution of the present study, and the research team, while recognizing the necessarily limited nature of its work, feels justified in making the following recommendations:

b. Recommendations

Access

- Reduce the fees parents must pay to send their children to school, by increasing the State's contribution, especially with regard to infrastructures.
- Analyze real needs in terms of school supplies, to ensure that such needs correspond to programs, and to improve the selection of textbooks used for each subject and reduce unnecessary costs to parents.
- Establish school records and a system of inspections, to improve management of school-related information (enrollment, number of students, administrative and teaching personnel, textbooks, and operating and development budget).
- Provide for and organize training in school administration for school staff. This training would take the form of sessions with principals and teachers.
- Create a framework for increasing the involvement of parents in managing the resources provided by the community, and their involvement in school-related problems.
- Formulate a policy to improve the image of teachers and of the teaching profession by providing in-service training and a policy to improve teachers' wages by adopting a career structure that offers an intermediary level between that of teacher and education officer, accessible through examination.
- Reorganize the final primary-school grades to give children access to vocational apprenticeship school.

Retention

- Conduct an information campaign among parents concerning the functions of the school, so that parents can direct their contributions and so that their expectations will match those functions.
- Make adjustments to the school schedule in some regions, to take into account certain specific factors—notably the farming calendar. These adjustments would reduce seasonal conflicts between farming activities and the school curriculum.
- Organize, together with the teaching staff, a school follow-up system, in the form of supervised after-school study periods, to be applied at all primary schools.

- Organize a framework for teacher-parent meetings, with a view to promoting the exchange of information and the resolution of children's school-related problems.
- Adopt measures to streamline programs and thereby increase teachers' and students' motivation and the time devoted to each subject.
- Encourage skills training at the primary schools to increase students' and parents' motivation with respect to children's education.
- Increase the teaching staff to compensate for the significant number of retirements effective under the new Public Sector Law.
- Promote school canteens, with a view to increasing students' motivation by providing a balanced diet and reducing the distances traveled by students between school and the home.

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Chapter 3

Gambia

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1. *Background*

The Gambia is one of the least developed countries in the world. The life expectancy is 52 years and its overall standard of living remains low with a GNP per capita of US $309 in 1993 and 29 percent of the population having an income below US $150 per year, the cutting point for locating the poor. The literacy rate for women remains low at 27 percent. Although 97 percent of the urban population has access to clean water, the corresponding figure for the rural population is only 50 percent. Assuming that the household determines much about an individual's access to education, work, and other social relationships (CSD, 1995) and that households can be grouped according to the socio-economic status of their heads, then the two largest socio-economic groups in the Gambia are made up of those households whose heads work respectively in the informal sector in the Greater Banjul area, and in the rural areas (with agriculture and its related activities as the main employer). Rural households have more children under nine years of age than urban households, and a larger household size (10 persons). In the urban areas the average household size is about six, but differences exist between ethnic groups.

With a population growth rate of 4.1 percent per annum, it has proved difficult to improve access to social sector services. However, with the present Programme for Sustained Development introduced in 1990 has come a re-direction of public expenditure programmes for the social sector services, so that the share of the education sector in the total national expenditure has increased to 22 percent (in 1995). Investment in education is now seen as a key to economic growth, with the social rate of return seen as highest for investment in primary education. It is also generally accepted that education increases the productivity of the poor and thus contributes to better income distribution and to the reduction of poverty.

2. Statement of the problem

a. The Gambia educational system

The educational system has been changing in recent years to accommodate the social changes and educational aspirations of the country. In 1986, the Gambia concluded a decade of educational development which was "guided by the policies and the plans outlined in Session paper No.5 of 1975, Education Policy 1976-1986" (MOE, 1996). During this period, enrollment in primary schools had increased from 24,629 in 1975/76 to 73,210 in 1985/86, with an annual average growth rate of 20 percent. During this period, enrollment expanded in secondary technical schools and senior secondary schools from 4,282 to 10,852 and from 1,896 to 4,699, respectively. Despite this rapid expansion in enrollment, many concerns were voiced "about the capacity of the country's education services to genuinely meet individual and national human resource development needs" (MOE, 1996).

In September 1987, the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture organised the First National Conference on Education to examine these capacity concerns. Among the issues that received special consideration were:

- The "inability of the primary school system to accommodate approximately 40 percent of eligible children" and the presumption that a good number of them were enrolled in the "Madrassah" (Formal Arabic/Islamic) schools or in the Darras (Informal Arabic/Islamic) schools.

- The literacy rate: in 1980, over 80 percent of Gambian citizens above age 15 were illiterate (MOE, 1996). However, outside the formal system of education "functional literacy classes had started in many parts of the country with assistance from government and non-government agencies."

- That "60 percent of all primary school teachers were unqualified and that, of 13,064 candidates for the Gambia Common Entrance Examination (the examination at the end of primary school) in 1986, only 27 percent were able to take up secondary places."

In December 1987, on the basis of the findings and recommendations of the First National Conference, the education policy for the Gambia, 1988-2003, was published. According to this policy, the education system was to be based on a 6-3-3-2 structure with three main policy objectives: access, quality, and relevance. The system was to be geared toward increased efficiency and toward making education cost-effective and sustainable. In 1992, the Common Entrance Examination was replaced by the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) at the end of Grade 6 and subsequently, in 1995, a mid-term review of the policy was carried out. This review showed that:

- primary school enrollment had been growing at the rate of 7 percent per annum from 1988/89 to 1994/95;
- the percentage of unqualified teachers in the primary schools had dropped from 60 to 37 percent by 1995;

- sixty percent of the primary school graduates could now take up secondary school places;
- thirty percent of those children who were not in the formal secondary school system (where English is the medium of instruction) were enrolled in the Madrassah system (MOE, 1996);
- the enrollment was generally on the same level in both rural and urban areas except in the Greater Banjul area where the enrollment was well below average.

The review also showed that the expansion in primary school enrollment had brought with it a number of attendant problems such as the insufficient supply of qualified teachers and teaching-learning materials, and the inadequate provision of school buildings and school furniture. A concern was also growing about the usefulness of primary school education for those primary school leavers who did not pursue further their studies: 5,709 out of 12,453 or 45.8 percent in 1994.

The review culminated, in a Second National Conference on Education in September 1995, during which the issues of access to primary school and organisation of basic education were re-examined. The ensuing policy statements (MOE, 1996) included the following:

- By the year 2003:
    - the entry age to the first year of primary education (Grade 1) would be lowered to six "as a means of allowing more girls to complete the basic cycle before reaching the age of 15;"
    - the enrollment rate should be increased to 85 percent, the implication being that 14,190 new places per year would need to be created;
    - due consideration should be given to the incorporation of the Madrassah system of education within the conventional school system and to the interaction between the two systems.

- The nine-year uninterrupted basic educational cycle should remain the Gambia's long-term commitment to basic education.

- The transition rate from primary education should be raised from 60 to 75 percent.

- Primary education should remain non-fee paying.

- Measures to improve access to basic education should include adequate community participation in, for example:
    - the establishment of branch libraries (in addition to those opened by the Central School Library Service);
    - the building and maintenance of schools;
    - the production and/or procurement of furniture, learning materials, and sports equipment;
    - occasional fund-raising events for special purposes;

- the identification of major local educational needs by school parent-teacher associations (PTA);
- a mass literacy campaign targeted to adult women, out-of-school girls, and disabled adults and adolescents;
- the continuation of the School Feeding Programme (albeit re-designed to meet realistic and sustainable objectives).

b. Justification for the study

Many educational systems in Africa are characterised by problems of low enrollment and retention. Also, in many African countries, low enrollment rates in primary schools are associated with frequent repetitions, because these reduce the actual number of pupils enrolled from the age group.

In cognisance of the Jomtien Conference declaration on "Education for All," Africa is presently witnessing the building of a new consensus around the notion of Universal Primary Education (UPE). According to King (1992), the old-styled UPE was mostly concerned with access to primary school education, that is, getting more places for children to enter school. The new message is concerned not only with enrollment but also with retention, since the current emphasis is not only on entry to, but also on completion of the primary school cycle. Thus, it becomes not a matter of more pupils enrolled in a class as a single concern, but also their retention, that is, their completion of the cycle of primary education (Lockheed et al., 1990).

Another important issue is the point at which poor retention (as manifested by the dropout rate) becomes a "problem." Arguably, poor retention depends primarily on the structure and objectives of the educational system of each country for the issue is whether dropping-out is more wasteful than leaving school at an established exit point (Williams, 1985). Dropping-out is wasteful if the benefits of schooling are disproportionately grouped at the end of each particular cycle; it is not if the benefits of a number of years of schooling accrue on a pro-rata basis.

In the Gambia, the issues of enrollment and retention were complicated because of the socio-economic context. A recent study in the Gambia, the 1993/94 Household Education and Health Survey Report (SDA, 1995), showed that children from "groundnut selling farm households" had the lowest enrollment rates (ranging from 15 to 24 percent) and those from the formal sector households, the highest enrollment rates (from 56 to 80 percent). However, it was not simply a geographical factor because children from "non-groundnuts selling farm households" in rural areas and rural "non-farm households" had enrollment rates of 45 and 51 percent, respectively. On the other hand, evidence of an adverse effect on enrollment and attendance existed where the daily travelling time for primary schools pupils was more than half-an-hour.

Regarding retention, the SDA report found that a "large number" of children commenced primary school but left before completing Grade 6, the formal completion of primary school. The main reason given for leaving was that "schooling was too expensive", especially among the "groundnut selling farm households." However, "the need to work" (especially among children in the urban areas), and marriage (especially among girls) were said to be two other important reasons for leaving school.

The present study was designed to investigate more in depth the factors affecting enrollment and retention in The Gambia primary schools. The findings are important in the context of the "Revised National Educational Policy 1988-2003" (MOE, 1996) as they could contribute to a better understanding of the determinants of access to and completion of primary education by school-age children, and help consolidate the national policy and related strategies.

3. *Review of relevant literature*

Africa, throughout the post independence era has witnessed the building of consensus around the notion of "Education for All," especially primary education. Several sub-regional, regional, and world conferences were convened, leading to a number of declarations, policies, strategies, and frameworks for action in favour of UPE. Today, more than 30 years later, significant progress has been made in increasing the participation rate in primary schools in Africa.

The achievement of primary education stated goals and objectives may hinge on the degree of the internal and external efficiency of the system. It is then necessary to reflect on the performance of primary schools in relation to the quantity and quality of their output (UNESCO, 1991). Although the output is difficult to define in meaningful, measurable terms, the main objective of primary education could be defined as the provision of basic literacy and numeracy for pupils. However, if high dropout rates exist coupled with low enrollment rates in primary schools, those affected may not acquire basic literacy and numeracy, especially girls and pupils from rural or agricultural communities of developing countries.

The combination of an increasing number of children out-of-school now and in the future and low primary school participation and completion rates means that primary education in most African countries is unlikely to improve the level of illiteracy. Notwithstanding huge investment programmes in primary education in the last three decades in Africa, a lot of evidence indicates high illiteracy rates particularly sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 1995).

According to UNESCO (1995), 139 million people age 15 and above were illiterate in sub-Saharan Africa, of whom 37.6 percent were men and 62.4 percent women. Of the 51 countries reviewed by the report, an illiteracy gender gap of 24 percent in favour of boys was recorded in 44 countries. The report revealed that, in Burkina Faso, Nepal, Somalia, and Sudan, fewer than 10 percent of adult woman were literate, compared to a 40 percent literacy rate for men. The report concluded that in countries with literacy rates of more than 70 percent, the gender gap was high; for example, in Libya, 30 percent, in Zaire, 26 percent, and in Botswana, 21 percent.

On the whole, the review of literature on enrollment and retention is neither extensive nor intensive due largely to the scarcity of relevant and current data. A few key studies or reports are quoted more often than necessary, thus reflecting the dearth of relevant literature in those areas.

a. Enrollment

In most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, evidence on low enrollment in primary schools and the difference between boys' and girls' enrollment were reported by some studies (GOG, 1995; Bledge et al, 1986; Collinson, 1985; Sago, 1984; UNESCO, 1993, 1994 and 1995). According to a 1995 World Bank report, in Africa alone, 50 percent of the eligible primary school cohort were not in school. For the future, the absolute number of children out-of-school will increase, as a result of demographic pressures on enrollments in primary schools. In this regard, the eligible primary school cohort in developing countries would increase by about 89 million by the year 2000. Given the increase that was projected in Africa, the primary school cohort population was expected to continue rising, thereby increasing the absolute number of out-of-school children in future, already estimated to be 130 million in 1990, of whom 60 percent were girls.

In many African countries, the improvements reported on enrollment were attributed to a range of factors including: the availability of more resources generally, free schooling, free basic text books, compulsory schooling, the introduction of Koranic classes especially in rural areas, more learning space, free uniforms, and free school meals (World Bank, 1995). On the contrary, low enrollment rates, as exemplified by Nigeria (1978), were often associated with frequent repetition, socio-cultural practices such as early marriage and economic factors. The Nigerian experience also emphasised that if the needs or expectations of rural people are not met by the formal school system, this could affect the registration and continuation of pupils in the primary schools.

Preference for boys' schooling in Africa could accelerate their participation rates, while adversely affecting those of girls (UNESCO, 1995). In some African countries, with meager earnings on average, the education of girls could be seen as a waste of resources, and certain African families may prefer to make sacrifices for boys, by enrolling and maintaining them in the primary schools as they are more likely to remain at home than girls who later marry and leave the family homes.

b. Dropout

Generally, children who leave primary school before the end of a defined cycle are described as dropouts or pushouts (UNDP, 1990; World Bank, 1995). In differentiating dropout from pushout, reference is always made to the underlining causes: if non-completion is the pupils' or parents' decision, it is regarded as a dropout; if however, non-completion is the result of rejection or disengagement by a school because of an academic or behavioral shortcoming, it is considered as a pushout or disengagement.

Evidence concerning dropouts and pushouts in African countries was also reported by some studies (Sago, 1984; Federal Government of Nigeria, 1978; UNESCO, 1994 and 1986; Coleman, 1994). According to a World Bank report (1995), in developing countries, 30 percent of children enrolled in primary school could not complete the full cycle and only 20 percent of the countries in Africa and in South Asia obtained completion rates above 80 percent. The report also argued that a correlation existed between repetition and dropout, because repetition often led to dropout. Thus in circumstances where children repeated classes several times unsuccessfully, this invariably led to dropout. Concerning gender differences, UNESCO (1994) indicated that in the main, the retention rate of girls was lower than that of boys in many countries.

Apart from repetition, factors that were associated with dropout were mainly low gross national product per capita and, in the case of girls, socio-cultural practices such as early marriage, domestic roles, and other discriminatory practice. Even the adoption of a new legislation requiring people to complete the primary cycle, such as the one introduced in Tanzania (Sago, 1984), did not prevent a large number of pupils from dropping out of the system.

c. Strategies for enhancing access and retention

In view of the reported low enrollment data and the high frequency of dropouts in primary schools, a number of strategies exist at school, community, national, regional, and global levels aimed at combating the twin problems. Studies conducted by the World Bank (1995) and UNESCO (1995) identified strategies such as the introduction of labor education, developing practical skills and providing appreciation for physical labor especially for rural primary pupils; a flexible promotion system; a closer school community link; national coordination for managing programs and innovation; and central government support to the communities and primary school.

According to the authors, these strategies enhanced community participation in affairs of primary schools as well as enabling vital resources to be made available to the district innovators and school staff. This concept of partnership involving parents, community associations, governments, the private sector, and local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is recognized in many African states as a viable strategy especially for the disadvantaged rural children and girls as their education could be more consistent with their needs and expectations.

Finally, activities conducted through a number of regional organizations and global initiatives are vital in realizing the goals and objectives of female education in Africa, especially the activities of such bodies like FAWE (The Forum for African Women's Education); FEMNET (The African Women Development and Communication Network); and a working group on Female Participation, set up as part of the strategy of ADEA (Association for the Development of Education in Africa).

4. Research methodology

a. Aim, research questions and main variables

In broad terms, the aim of the present study was two-fold:

- to obtain the views of some stakeholders in educating primary school children about the influence of a whole range of factors on enrollment and retention;
- to compare and contrast the views of these different groups of stakeholders

The stakeholders were: parents, teachers, head teachers, Grade 5 pupils, and policymakers. The factors were: (i) the relevant policies of central government; and (ii) parents' economic status, religious convictions and cultural values. The research questions were:

Enrollment

- What was the preferred alternative: conventional schools or Madrassah schools?
- What were the strategies for increasing enrollment?

- What forms of assistance did the community give in order to increase enrollment?
- Were the primary schools too far from the children's home for their enrollment?
- Was the economic status of parents a barrier to enrollment?
- Was the education of girls a barrier to increasing the enrollment?
- Was there a need for a national policy about enrollment?

Retention

- What were the effective strategies for improving retention as such?
- What were the effective strategies for improving retention (in the sense of reducing the dropout rate)?
- What advice was given to pupils about repeating Grade 6?

The **independent variables** of the study were:

- for head teachers, teachers and parents: division, tribe, gender, religion, educational qualifications;
- additionally:
    - for head teachers and teachers: number of years of teaching;
    - for parents: economic status (whether in salaried employment or self-employed);
- for pupils: division, tribe, gender, and religion.

The **dependent variables** consisted of attitudes, opinions, and perceived positive and negative influences on enrollment and retention in primary education, including: (i) attitudes toward Western and Madrassah education; (ii) job prospects for primary school leavers; (iii) girls' education; (iv) community participation; (v) government and related policies and programs that enhance enrollment and retention; (vi) repetition; (vii) retention; (viii) dropout rate; and (ix) strategies for improving enrollment and retention.

Enrollment. In the present study this term refers [illegible] the actual number of children of the same age group (6 years old) who enroll in Grade 1 in primary schools.

Retention. The three aspects of this concept are as follows:

- Retention refers to the number of pupils who complete the cycle of primary school education without repeating a single class.

- Retention in the sense of repetition refers to the number of pupils who repeat classes at any given point in a cycle (and are therefore retained at school).

- Retention may also be viewed as the opposite of dropping out of the primary school system at any given point in the cycle; and hence issues of retention are inextricably linked with issues of dropping out in the present study.

b. Sampling methods and procedures

The Gambia is divided into seven administrative divisions. Each of them comprises regional education offices (REO) headed by a principal education officer (PEO), responsible for the administration and management of education in the region. The findings of the study are derived from three divisions:

1. Greater Banjul Area:	typically urban – Region 1
2. Lower River Division:	rural – Region 3: Mansakonko
3. Upper River Division:	typically rural – Region 6: Basse

Respondent groups were identified from local communities, primary schools and institutions such as local area councils in each of the three divisions. A two-staged, stratified cluster sampling procedure was used in identifying the samples, as follows:

The sample of regions. All educational regions in the country were listed in alphabetical order, with reference to the location of the head offices. Three educational regions were randomly selected with regard to the following criteria: urban, rural, and typical rural.

The selection of the respondent groups. As a result of the following methods and procedures, a total of 675 respondents participated in the study.

- *The sample of primary schools:* the primary schools in each Region were ranked in alphabetical order and 50 schools were selected according to these criteria: government/private; large/small; and high girls' enrollment rate/low girls' enrollment rate.

- *The sample of head teachers and teachers:* 25 heads and 50 primary Grade 5 teachers from each educational region were identified using a range of criteria such as male/female and experience.

- *The sample of pupils:* the targeted primary schools were arranged in alphabetical order. For each school, the nominal roll, the ownership (government – private) and the boy/girl balance were also indicated. Based on these criteria the Grade 5 samples, which varied in size according to differences in the school populations, were selected. Altogether, 300 Grade 5 pupils were identified and 100 of them were girls.

- *The sample of parents:* the sample of parents consisted of individuals whose children or wards were in Grade 5. From the randomly selected districts, municipalities and administrative wards, villages with primary schools were identified and arranged alphabetically. The parental samples were then identified with particular reference to differences between villages including: (i) major economic activity; (ii) sex; (iii) ethnicity; and (iv) level of formal education. Fifty parents from each education region were chosen.

- *The sample of policy initiators and public administrators:* those respondents included division commissioners, principal education officers, area council executives, and district chiefs. In selecting the individuals, a purposive non-random method was used to ensure the inclusion of each group in all the educational regions targeted for the study. One respondent from each group in each education region was chosen for the study.

c. Data collection and analysis procedures

A multi-method approach was used, yielding both qualitative and quantitative sets of data. The means of data collection, developed and administered under the supervision of the principal researchers were as follows: documentary studies, semi-formal interviews, completion of a questionnaire. The triangulation method used in this study allowed the opinion of various groups of respondents to be sampled on a number of related common issues, and these opinions were variables defined in the previous section of this report as the dependent variables of the study.

The documentary studies were conducted in government and private institutions in the Gambia and Senegal. The main sources of data were official state documents and commissioned or research reports published by international donors and organisations. The studies focused on the following areas: (i) geo-political profile of the country; (ii) trends in the development of formal education; (iii) national census and household surveys on population and economic well-being; and (iv) relevant reports in educational development.

Semi-formal interviews were held with individual policy initiators and administrators, using an interview schedule, to sample their opinions on a range of key issues for the investigation. All the interviews were instantly stenographically recorded and later transcribed into English.

All the questionnaire items were filled in by all the respondent groups (head teachers, teachers, parents, and pupils) in each of the targeted education regions. For the non-literate parents, the questionnaire items were translated into their own dialects by teachers and head teachers, while the research assistants recorded the parents' responses in English.

The SPSS programme was used to analyze the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires. Given that the variables were discrete, the analytical procedure consisted of:

- cross-tabulating each "independent" variable with each "dependent" variable, for each category of respondents and identifying the significant chi-squares;
- following this initial statistical analysis with a log-linear analysis to identify the statistically significant associations between the "independent" variables and the "dependent" variables within those cross-tabulations where the chi-squares were statistically significant.

The reported associations were the only ones that were found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

A content analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken and from this analysis emerged a few recurrent themes which were related to the aims and objectives of the study.

d. Special issues

Validity and reliability issues

To a large extent, considerations were given to ensuring both the reliability and validity of the findings, especially face and content validity. These objectives were achieved through the adoption of the following measures:

- the questionnaires and the interview schedules were grounded in the realities of the education system in the Gambia and in the socio-cultural context;
- the questions asked in the questionnaires and in the interview schedules were a representative sample of the domain of content;
- the use of triangulation, that is, the adoption of different research methods, and of multiple researchers;
- the refining of the instruments after the pilot work;
- the employment of trained research assistants, fluent in the local dialects of the respondents;
- the instant electronic transcription of responses and the editing of the translated English versions;
- lengthy discussions about access and retention with colleagues from the Côte d'Ivoire during the transnational workshops;
- periodic meetings of the national research network in which key issues concerning improving the research project were discussed.

The external validity of the findings or the extent to which the findings of the research are generalizable was less strong than face and content validity mainly because of the small sample size. However, the value of the present study lies in the fact that it combines a concern for discovering the factors that relate to the actual problem of enrollment and retention with an attempt to look at structural and social inequalities in terms of, for example, gender and socio-economic background, ethnicity, and level of education.

Ethical issues

In conducting this study the researchers were morally responsible to their sponsors, their clients or respondents, and beneficiaries. The responsibility raised a number of ethical issues. During the preliminary field visits, the research team organized meetings with groups of respondents throughout the educational regions targeted for the study. The topics discussed included: an overview of the research project; the likely practical importance of the study; the need to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity regarding the information that respondent groups were to provide; and how they were to be involved in disseminating the findings. Overall, the respondents were enthusiastic about being associated with the research and indicated their willingness to participate in it. Therefore, although they could not be involved in planning the various stages of the study, they were able to understand the research project particularly its stated objectives, data collection strategies, and intended outcomes.

5. Findings

a. Enrollment

What was the preferred alternative: conventional schools or Madrassah schools?

The parents:

- In the rural areas, the majority of the parents sent their children to Madrassah schools instead of conventional schools.
- Forty two percent of them said that their religious beliefs were the most important factor that inhibited them from enrolling their children in Grade 1 although only 20 percent in the Greater Banjul division said so.
- Forty five percent of the rural parents who responded said they sent their girls to Islamic schools as it was believed that formal schools delayed marriage.
- Twenty one percent of the parents pointed out that formal schooling made their girls less domesticated. At the same time, 15 percent of the parents considered cultural barriers to be an inhibiting factor in the enrollment of children.
- Finally, 81 percent of them said that they were prepared to enroll their children in primary schools if school feeding programmes were provided.

The policy initiators and public administrators:

- According to the principal education officers (PEO), the main factors explaining why parents sent their children to Madrassah schools instead of conventional schools are that:
  - most parents in the rural areas feared the Christianization of their children;
  - the practice of child labor: parents send their children to Madrassah schools with the understanding that they could easily withdraw them from school to help them on farms.
- The PEOs said that the only way to overcome this problem was to impose a law making child labor illegal.
- According to the chiefs, parents chose to send their children to Madrassah schools because:
  - they fear that Western education made their children lose all traditional beliefs and moral values;

- the conventional school system did not cater for enough Koranic teachers and the Koranic lessons were inadequate, so that children did not receive the type of religious education expected.

The head teachers and teachers:

- Fifty seven percent of the school heads approved the idea of parents (especially those in the rural areas) "sending their children to Madrassah schools rather than to conventional schools."
- Sixty one percent of the teachers considered the "school feeding programme" as one of the "most important" factors in motivating parents to enroll their children in primary schools while another 22 percent of the teachers considered such programmes as just another "important" factor.

The pupils:

- Pupils in the study thought that the presence of "good Koranic teachers" in primary schools encouraged parents to enroll their children in schools.
- The pupils in the Greater Banjul Division thought differently with only 36 percent holding this view.

What were the strategies for increasing enrollment?

The parents:

- Forty two percent of the parents considered that a "joint campaign by the school and the community" was one of the most effective strategies for improving the enrollment rate.
- However, 81 percent were prepared to enroll all their children in primary schools if Koranic teachers were employed in these schools.
- Fifty six percent thought that employing more female teachers as "rolemodels" in rural schools would convince rural parents to enroll their children in the primary schools.
- However, when faced with the option as to whom to send to school, 78 percent of the same parents considered that the economic benefits likely to accrue from schooling favored sending the boy rather than the girl to school.

The head teachers and teachers:

- Eighteen percent of head teachers saw "good discipline" as one of the "most important" strategies for increasing enrollment.

- Twenty four percent considered that a "joint campaign by the school and the community" was the "most important" strategy.

- Fifty percent of the head teachers and teachers thought that a joint sensitisation campaign by their schools and their communities would be the "one best effective strategy" to improve enrollment.

- Twenty seven percent of the teachers responded that having a "good standing" in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination could also be one of the most effective strategies.

- Twenty eight percent agreed in equal proportions that both "mass sensitization of the community" and making primary schools "non-fee paying" would indeed be most effective.

- Ten percent of the teachers also thought that "government legislation" would help to increase enrollment, as would "building primary schools close to the community to minimize the distance travelled."

The pupils:

- Sixty one percent of the pupils saw the "school feeding programme" as "an encouragement" to parents to enroll their children in primary schools.

- A smaller proportion (52%) of the pupils in the Greater Banjul division shared this opinion.

What forms of assistance did the community give in order to increase enrollment?

The parents:

- Seventy percent of the parents considered that the "most frequent" form of assistance given by the community was in-kind (in the form of labor).

- The parents provided various other forms of "assistance" to enhance learning: 84 percent contributed to the "school funds," 63 percent provided textbooks, and 38 percent paid the "study fees." 46 percent of the pupils questioned about the assistance provided by parent concurred.

The head teachers and teachers:

- Eighty percent of the head teachers felt that their local communities viewed the idea of schooling favorably.

- Sixty eight percent agreed with the parents that most of the assistance that the community gave was in the form of labor; a possible reason for this was that most of the parents were seasonal farmers.

- Fifty seven percent of the teachers said that school "open days" brought the community into school and 79 percent of the teachers added that these "open days" were organized yearly.

The policy initiators and public administrators:

- Unanimously the chiefs said that they helped:
  - the schools within their jurisdiction to construct new classrooms;
  - in the sensitization exercises which take place at the beginning of each academic year to increase enrollment.

- The PEO explained that:
  - the rural regions were all "closed societies" and that people are not aware of the benefits of education;
  - an effective strategy would be one that: (i) mobilizes the villagers; (ii) draws them closer to the civil servants; and (iii) establishes in each village a local sensitization committee that would market primary school education to people.

- The local government officers ranged the practical assistance given by the communities from the fencing of school to financial contributions and the provision of labor for the building of new classroom blocks.

Were the primary schools too far from the children's home for their enrollment?

The pupils:

- Eighty three percent of the pupils said that a primary school was located in their village or town. The remaining pupils said that they had to travel between one and five kilometres to school every day.

- Eighty seven percent said that their attendance at school was "regular."

One chief said that building more schools close to the local communities would motivate parents to enroll their children in school: otherwise, young children were compelled to remain at home.

Was the economic status of parents a barrier to enrollment?

The pupils:

- Sixty two percent of the pupils said that their fathers were responsible for meeting all of their school expenses.

- However, 45 percent of these fathers were farmers and had problems in meeting school expenses.

- Fifty three percent of pupils from the Mandinka tribe and 40 percent from the Fula tribe identified the persons responsible for their school expenses as farmers.

- Eleven percent of the pupils from the Mandinka tribe identified the persons responsible as business men or women and 7 percent of the pupils from the Wollof tribe identified those persons as "salary earners."

Was the education of girls a barrier to increasing the enrollment?

The policy initiators and public administrators:

- Chiefs remarked that sending girls to school was a complete waste of time and resources because girls would "get pregnant, get married, and leave school," but that attitudes towards girls' education were changing positively.

- Commissioners, too, agreed that sending girls to school was still a problem despite the mass sensitization. The main factor responsible for this problem was that Western education was perceived as bad because it awakened girls sexually or domestically and changed them into mistresses in the home instead of turning them into wives who serve their husbands, as dictated by the custom.

- Local government officers saw the enrollment of girls as an endemic problem because despite the sensitization of parents, the problem was still present. The might be to adopt a law to force parents to send their children to school.

Was there a need for a national policy about enrollment?

The policy initiators and public administrators:

- Chiefs were of the opinion that a national policy should exist to increase enrollment and that it should cover a wide range of issues from "free schooling" to compulsory education for girls.

- Commissioners and the local government officers were in full agreement with these sentiments, but the former added that this policy should also cover the proper introduction of religious education in schools.

- PEOs argued that a national policy was already in place and that what remained to be done was implementing the policy. They argued that compulsory education had many problems and grey areas because it involved a lot of money to implement it effectively.

b. Retention questions

What were the effective strategies for improving retention as such?

The parents:

- 60 percent of the parents said that the most important reason for retaining their children in primary schools up to and including Grade 6 was that their children might be "rich and successful in life."
- The main strategies for improving retention were:
    - "good discipline" in schools (identified by 30% of the parents);
    - "success in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination" (25%);
    - a "joint campaign by school and community" (22%).

The head teachers and teachers:

- Only 8 percent of head teachers saw "good discipline" as the "one most important strategy."
- Ninety two percent were of the opinion that a national policy to improve retention in schools could be formulated and 94 percent amongst these favored a policy that advocated compulsory education; 85 percent of the teachers shared this view.
- Head teachers' opinions were evenly divided on whether the standing of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination affected the retention of pupils at school.
- Proportionately more head teachers than teachers recommended the following strategies as the most effective ones for improving retention as such (see Table 1):
    - increasing the earning capacity of parents (heads: 25%; teachers: 8%);
    - making post-primary schools free (heads: 27%; teachers: 6%);
    - building primary schools close to the communities to minimize the problem of travelling (heads: 25%; teachers: 10%).
- Eighteen percent of head teachers and 20 percent of teachers expressed the opinion that in rural areas, attendance at Madrassah schools adversely affected the retention of pupils.
- Thirty percent of head teachers and 29 percent of teachers supported the idea of "mass sensitization of the community" as the most effective strategy for improving retention; in the Greater Banjul division, only 9 percent of teachers supported such a recommendation.

Table 1: Recommended strategies for improving retention

Strategies perceived as most effective for improving retention	Head teachers (n=60) n	Head teachers (n=60) %	Teachers (n=117) n	Teachers (n=117) %
Mass sensitization of the community	18	30	34	29
Increasing the earning capacity of parents	15	25	10	8
Government legislation	15	25	21	18
Making post-primary school free	16	27	7	6
Building more primary schools close to the communities	15	25	12	10

The policy initiators and public administrators:

- Commissioners recognized the central importance of the "mass sensitisation of the community;" they had worked very closely with the PEOs in the division to "spread the good news" and this strategy was yielding some very encouraging results.

- PEOs confirmed that the community usually helped in building schools.

What were the effective strategies for reducing the dropout rate?

The head teachers and teachers (see Table 2):

- Twenty three percent of head teachers and 37 percent of teachers saw the building of classrooms as the most important way of combating the dropout rate in primary schools, in Greater Banjul, the proportion of teachers holding this view rose to 87 percent.

- Forty eight percent of head teachers and 30 percent of teachers supported the notion to make education freely available the most important way to combat the dropout rate in primary schools.

- Ensuring job opportunities for school leavers appeared to be valued by both head teachers and teachers. Providing more furniture was unanimously perceived as the less effective way to combat the dropout rate.

Table 2: Ways to combat the dropout rate

Ways perceived as most important in combating the dropout rate	Head teachers (n=60) n	Head teachers (n=60) %	Teachers (n=117) n	Teachers (n=117) %
Building more classrooms	14	23	44	37
Providing more furniture	8	13	14	12
Ensuring job opportunities for school leavers	22	37	38	32
Making education freely available	29	48	36	30

The policy initiators and public administrators:

- Chiefs confirmed that the dropout rate in their respective jurisdictions was a problem and identified the cause of the problem as financial and cultural:
  - culturally, according to the tradition, when a girl is physically mature she should leave school for marriage. This view was reinforced by the PEOs;
  - financially, the problem was that most of the parents were farmers and could not meet the financial demands of schooling.

- Chiefs thought that the issue of dropping out of school was the creation of the schools themselves because parents were overtaxed and could not afford all the various extras that schools demanded from them.

- Local government officers also saw the problem of dropping out as financial. However, they all remarked that the problem was especially prevalent among the parents belonging to the Serehule tribe because they withdrew their children from school to assist them on the farms.

The pupils:

- Ninety six percent of the pupils said that they intended to complete their primary school education. This intention was evident even among the 36 percent of pupils who had repeated a class in previous years (see Table 3) and revealed a hunger for education.

Table 3: Pupils who intended to complete their primary school education

		Pupils intending to complete their primary school education					
		Yes		No		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Pupils having repeated a class in previous year	Yes	90	35.9	1	33.3	91	35.8
	No	161	64.1	2	66.6	163	64.2
TOTAL		251	100.0	3	100.0	254	100.0

What advice was given to pupils about repeating Grade 6?

The parents:

- For 92 percent of the parents, if their children failed to obtain admission to the middle schools, they would advise them to repeat Grade 6.

The head teachers and teachers:

- Half the number of head teachers questioned shared the view of the parents and gender was not an issue. They would give the same advice to girls whether or not they agreed with people who said that girls should not be sent to school.
- The uncertainty of 42 percent of the head teachers about whether there was a "school policy on repetition" was intriguing, if only because half of the teachers questioned said that there was such a policy in their schools.
- According to 32 percent of the teachers, in any school it was the head teacher who had "the final say whether or not" a child should repeat a particular class. In practice, according to the head teachers, 66 percent of the pupils were "most likely to get entry to skills centers."
- Along with the head teachers and the parents, 79 percent of teachers would not advise pupils to dropout of school or to "take up farming" (77 percent) if they were unable to gain access into a middle school.
- Instead, 84 percent of the teachers would advise their pupils to enroll at the skills centers rather than repeat Grade 6.

c. Summary of the findings

The low level of enrollment in conventional schools

- Parents, especially those in the rural areas, said that their religious beliefs were the most important factor that inhibited them from enrolling their children in Grade 1.
- The rural parents believed, in addition, that conventional schools delayed marriage for girls and made them less domesticated.
- Rural parents preferred to send their children to the Madrassah schools rather than to the conventional schools with the understanding that they could easily withdraw them from school to help on the farms.
- Rural parents believed that conventional schools were built too far from the villages.

- Chiefs believed that professional misconduct among teachers had left a negative impression on parents about enrolling girls in school.
- The teachers believed that the limited number of places in the middle schools lowered the enrollment rate in Grade 1.

The proposed strategies to increase enrollment

- Parents considered that a joint campaign by schools and communities was one of the most effective strategies for improving enrollment.
- Parents thought that employing more female teachers to act as role models in rural schools would convince rural parents to enroll their children in the conventional schools.
- Teachers thought that building primary schools close to the communities to minimize the distance travelled to school would increase enrollment.
- Teachers believed that making conventional schools non-fee paying would increase enrollment.
- Teachers believed that a national policy that aimed at increasing enrollment should be enacted.
- Pupils thought that the presence of "good Koranic teachers" would encourage parents to enroll their children in conventional schools.
- Principal education officers saw the establishment of a sensitization committee in each village (to market primary school education to the people) as an effective strategy to increase enrollment.

Retention

Retention as such

- Parents saw "good discipline" in school to be the most effective strategy for the retention of pupils in primary schools.
- Parents thought that the success rate of the school's students in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination would encourage parents to retain their children in primary schools.
- Head teachers believed that a national policy could be formulated to advocate for compulsory education.

- Commissioners of divisions thought that mass sensitization of the communities was the most effective strategy for improving retention.

Retention as reducing the drop-out rate

- Teachers saw the building of more classrooms as the most important way to combat the dropout rate in primary schools.

- Head teachers supported the notion of making education freely available as the most important way to combat the dropout rate in primary schools.

Retention in terms of repetition

- The parents believed that access to middle schools would increase the retention rate in the primary schools.

- Teachers saw introducing a school policy on repetition as an effective strategy to increase the retention rate in primary schools.

6. *Discussion and recommendations*

a. Study limitations

The findings of the present study have provided some evidence of the need for the government to reappraise its commitment to the rural population. A specific consideration in this regard was involving the rural people in formulating educational policy as was evident during the Educational Policy mid-term review exercise (MOE, 1996). It is perhaps self-evident that local communities are involved in managing schools by becoming members of the PTA, but the question is how involved are they in budgeting and planning school activities and evaluating school performance.

More generally, the study highlighted factors perceived by the stakeholders as affecting enrollment and retention in primary education. While conducting the study, it became apparent to the research team that the topic was too important for this study to deal with the ramifications of all the principal problems. In attempting to meet the challenges, the researchers faced other constraints, namely, the lack of adequate funds needed to conduct the study, the limitations on the time available for the completion of the research project, both in terms of data collection, and of data analysis and interpretation.

Due to the foregoing limitations, and although the data collected could have allowed it, a more detailed analysis was not performed. Of course this is a serious limitation to the usefulness of the study which should therefore be completed by analyses of, for example, the links between respondents' opinions and "hard facts" as depicted through official statistics on variables such as class enrollment, dropout rates, teachers experience/training, class size or quantity/availability of pedagogical materials by grade, type of school, and region. This study should nevertheless be seen as an exploratory study, which fills an important gap in the knowledge of enrollment and retention in Africa, especially when combined with the study conducted by the ERNWACA team in Côte d'Ivoire (Koffi and Koffi, 1999) through the transnational research agenda.

b. Conclusion

In order to attain the objectives formulated in its Vision 2020 document, notably "increasing the accessibility of education to 90 percent of the school-age population," the Government of the Gambia has the responsibility to coordinate the timing and character of the participation of all the stakeholders. A persistent and difficult problem for the government is the allocation of resources, as between urban and rural districts.

The need to enroll children in schools whether Madrassah or conventional is not in dispute. However, the practicalities of enrolling children in conventional schools and retaining them through a defined cycle are not so straightforward; cultural barriers, religious beliefs, and traditional values do seem to be the restrictors.

A gap was observed between parents' interest in educating girls and the actual figures on girls' literacy. This gap could be attributed to the low enrollment and the persistent withdrawal of girls from school. The desire of parents for socio-economic development, which they perceive as being a direct benefit of education, is thereby frustrated. On the part of the government no policy stipulated the compulsory enrollment or mandatory attendance of girls until they attained a certain age.

It seems likely that these issues will be addressed by the government through mass sensitization. It was suggested by the respondents that the maximum impact on enrollment and retention could be gained through the following strategies:

- a joint campaign by school and community;
- recruitment of more Koranic teachers;
- recruitment of more female teachers;
- introduction of a national policy to make education compulsory;
- building primary schools close to the communities to minimize problems of traveling long distances to school.

However, the Gambia has still a very long way to go before a sufficient and systematic policy on enrollment and retention exists on a national basis. This will only occur if a system is devised at the grassroots level where policymakers, teachers, and parents work together.

c. Recommendations

In recognition of the identified factors to encourage enrollment and guarantee retention of pupils in primary schools, the following interconnected recommendations are made:

- A massive sensitization of the communities should be undertaken to encourage the enrollment of more girls in Grade 1.

- A joint campaign by school and community should be vigorously pursued to encourage pupils to complete the primary cycle.

- Madrassah education should be developed to include the teaching of the English language.

- More female and Koranic teachers should be employed in primary schools especially in the rural areas.

- In order to encourage enrollment in Grade 1 and guarantee the retention of pupils at least in the primary cycle, the government must enact a national policy on the compulsory education and retention of pupils in the primary school.

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Section II

The relationship between community participation, access, and quality in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, and Togo

Chapter 4

Benin

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1. *Context of the study*

Like many countries in the sub-region of western and central Africa, Benin has been experimenting since the 1960s with educational reforms aimed at making primary education more democratic, in line with the goals set out in the 1961 Charter on Education adopted at the Addis Ababa Conference, as well as the resolutions contained in the 1990 Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (EFA). Although the number of students attending primary education facilities rose at an annual rate of 43.3 percent between 1975 and 1992, the gross enrollment rate in 1992 was only 59.9 percent, the net enrollment rate 48 percent, and the illiteracy rate 71.4 percent overall (80.8% among women). In 1990, when the convention on education was held, the number of students in the primary education sector fell 13.3 percent, from 61 percent in 1985 to 50 percent in 1990.

This major crisis in the education system—which was reflected in children's access to and retention in the system, and in the quality of teaching—led to the 1990 Reform of the educational system. The primary goals of the Reform were to increase access to education, to improve its quality, and to make it more equitable. The Reform legislation foresaw a specific role for the communities, which have since then participated in the Reform measures, especially in the area of basic education. However, attempts to make the education system more democratic have been made within a context in which, due to the acute economic crisis and the implementation of structural adjustment programs, the State is increasingly withdrawing from its responsibilities and obligations in education. Furthermore, the few available studies on community participation show that schools in Benin have never been able to integrate successfully into their immediate environment, and that parents do not regard themselves as being particularly involved in the life of the schools, preferring to see their role as being confined to school funding.

2. Issues

The aims of the Benin educational system, as defined under the Reform of 1990, were as follows: (i) to train highly-competent adults who are able to work on their own initiative, who actively search for solutions, who are enthusiastic self-starters, and who are able to create jobs and to make an effective contribution to the country's development; (ii) to train adults who are both technically skilled and balanced as individuals; and (iii) to serve as a force for social change. Despite the considerable investments made, the formal education sector is not able to provide schooling for all children of enrolment age, and dropout rates in the sector are high. As well as implementing measures aimed at extending and improving the quality of primary sector teaching services, the current reform process also recognizes the need to go beyond the traditional field of formal education to ensure equal opportunity for all in the matter of access to education and to extend basic-education services to the greatest possible proportion of the population. Literacy teaching efforts began by addressing the uneducated adult population, but now mainly concern the youngest sectors of the population, especially the so-called "cattle-herd children" and "street children."

The development and extension of basic-education services for all cannot be achieved if pertinent strategies are not implemented to ensure the participation of the beneficiaries and their communities in the proposed programs. This view is based on the following considerations:

- economic factors, which have led to a redefinition of the level at which the various partners contribute to expenditure in education and of the degree to which community participation is used as a strategy for mobilizing the resources needed to develop education systems;
- the concern to make educational programs effective through appropriate learning· that is, learning most suited to the prevailing circumstances in each local community;
- the democratic aspirations clearly manifested in the recent political changes that have taken place in the country;
- the desire of government authorities to open further a sector that has long been closed to the intervention of the local communities.

In Benin, the "right to education" took on a new dimension with the development of democratic ideas. Strategies for collective advancement and for mobilization of the "masses" and their initiatives (which grew out of the socialist thinking of the 1970s and 1980s), combined with the way in which the basic rights of citizens have been exercised under the "democratic renewal," have not only brought calls for greater collaboration and participation in education, but also, and above all, have inspired new ways of thinking about the right to education. This has been reflected in an increased participation by communities in the provision of education and a resulting concern for quality. In recent years, this trend has been reflected in the expansion of the number of private schools and literacy centers that have been either created or requested by communities. Now aware of their influence and their capacity to engineer change, the Students' Parents Associations (APEs) are forming, organizing, and training themselves to play their roles more effectively and to participate actively alongside the government in the search for solutions to educational issues. The APEs constitute genuinely powerful pressure groups, which the country's political leaders now take into account when developing their strategies for negotiating with teachers' and students' unions.

In order to be able to make the best use of community participation as a way to foster the development of basic-education services, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the government is presently studying new legislation to strengthen the regulations provided for under the Reform of 1990. The new institutional framework envisaged by the State focuses on the following: (i) community involvement in decision-making with regard to the life of the school; (ii) diversification of funding sources and rationalizing of the use of material and human resources; (iii) preparation and implementation of a program designed to strengthen the ability of APEs and school management to administrate schools; (iv) implementation of a diagnostic study on private teaching with a view to formalizing a development strategy for this sector; and (v) identification of effective mechanisms for the mobilization of local resources.

Until now, no systematic study has been carried out to evaluate and analyze communities' experiences with participation and the effect of that participation on the education sector in general. The very few available studies have focused more on the cost and funding aspects of the formal education sector. Furthermore, the contribution of families, individuals, and local communities has not always been evaluated in a satisfactory manner. Thus, most of the quasi-magical virtues attributed to community participation in the many declarations and statements made on this subject appear to be based entirely on unsubstantiated theories. The aim of the present study, carried out by a team of researchers from ERNWACA/Benin, is to highlight the mechanisms underlying community participation, as well as the strategies developed by communities to increase access to education and to improve its quality. The overall goal of this study is to assess the impact of community participation on access to basic education and on its quality. More specifically, our study aims: (i) to identify the areas, forms, levels, and experiences of community participation existing in the basic-education sector; (ii) to analyze the effects of community participation on access to basic education and on its quality; and (iii) to highlight the opportunities and constraints involved with community participation in basic education.

3. *Conceptual framework*

In an effort to cover our target effectively, we defined a fairly broad conceptual framework for community participation and basic education, based on a range of theoretical data and a sound understanding of how the community functions in Benin. The diversity, and above all the uniqueness of the experience of participating in education in this country require a descriptive method and an analytical approach that are not adequately addressed by existing theories on participation.

a. Basic education

Basic education is defined as the sum of all the minimum knowledge, expertise, social skills, and awareness one needs in order to develop as an individual, to fulfil one's potential to the utmost, and to take one's place as an individual and as a member of a local, national, and international community, within a changing context. Within the Beninese educational system, basic education comprises the following:

- in the formal system: (i) pre-school, which lasts for two or three years; and (ii) primary school, which lasts for six years (divided into three two-year periods) and leads to the Certificate of Primary Education (CEP);

- in the informal system: adult literacy programs and the various methods used to provide education to out-of-school school children, notably: initial literacy, post-literacy, and literacy/ training or specialized training. This literacy system is aimed at a much wider portion of the population than that affected by the primary school, and develops according to the needs of each respective local environment or type of community.

b. The community

A community is defined as a group of persons acknowledging shared or divergent interests and situated within a geographical space that is more or less circumscribed, depending on the nature of their shared location. Communities may be defined in terms of their immediate environment. In this respect, distinction is made between the following:

- the urban environment, which is a geographical space having a certain number of service infrastructures and meeting certain viability criteria, such as having running water, electricity, telephones, and various other means of communication. It is thus an environment in which different economic activities and populations of different origins are concentrated. This is what gives this environment its heterogeneous and cosmopolitan character;
- the semi-urban environment, which is a geographical space situated on the outskirts of the urban space, and which accommodates its excess population. It is characterized by a form of housing that does not always meet the requisite hygiene and safety standards. It is a space in which a heterogeneous, low-income population is concentrated;
- the rural environment, which, unlike the urban environment, accommodates a more homogenous population, sharing the same cultural and/or linguistic values. It is marked by a lack or total absence of infrastructures and basic social services. The incomes of the inhabitants stem essentially from farming, crafts, and hunting activities.

A community may also be defined in terms of the main socio-economic activities of its members, as well as in terms of dominant shared cultural traits, such as membership in a linguistic or religious group. Lastly, communities may be defined by their economic viability, understood as a collection of quantitative and qualitative indexes, which reflect the quality of life of its members and which comprise the following elements: state of the community's health services (measured in terms of health infrastructures, vaccination coverage rate, infant mortality rate, and birth rate), level of education/literacy, environment, and housing situation.

c. Participation and community participation

Participation embraces the different kinds of contributions (material, financial, moral, intellectual, and practical) that may be made to a cause to promote personal and/or collective interests. This process is intimately linked to the economic and social reality of communities (Herrera, 1989). The relevant literature on this topic portrays community participation partly as a strategy (a way of achieving a goal), and partly as a goal (a form of autocentric, self-managed community development). Furthermore, case studies of experiences with community participation in the subregion reveal economic, educational, or ethical motivations and reasons for community participation (Zévounou, 1993).

Types of participation

The literature on community participation in basic education identifies several different types of participation. Our study, departing essentially from the analysis of LeBoterf (1980), recognizes the following three types: (i) voluntary participation; (ii) induced participation; and (iii) mandatory participation. However, because it is easier methodologically, and in the light of the data we collected, we chose to group together induced and mandatory participation.

Voluntary participation is a type of participation according to which "a social group (...) itself takes the initiative to participate in administering an [educational] system, a program, or an activity" (LeBoterf, cited by Zévounou, 1993). To the extent that this definition implies that a community takes—uncoerced, spontaneously, and alone—the initiative of organizing itself to regulate how it will make a contribution, this type of participation is not very widespread. Induced and mandatory participation are much more commonly found. Their emergence coincided with the advent of the APEs, which manage relationships between the community and the Governmnent in the definition and regulation of community participation in education. In this context, community participation consists of financial contributions (registration and tuition fees), the amounts of which are virtually imposed upon parents. The APEs also serve as a tool for mobilizing communities toward the basic-education process, by providing human resources (manpower for construction, rehabilitation, and/or extension of schools) and material resources (furniture, construction materials, and teaching materials).

Forms of participation

Our study defines three different forms of community participation in basic education in Benin:

- participation in decision-making: the decision-making power exercised within a partnership arrangement is defined in terms of a position effect (reflected in the place occupied by the community in initiating measures carried out in basic education), and in its degree of participation (determined by the importance of its role in the achievement of goals);
- participation in the funding of basic education: funding is understood here as the contribution made by students' parents, on an individual basis. Three kinds of contribution are made toward the development of basic education: financial (in cash), material (in kind), and human (in the form of unpaid work);
- participation in the educational process: this type of contribution may be manifested in material terms (construction, expansion, and maintenance of school premises; the supply of building materials and teaching materials), in administrative terms (functioning of the institution, management), and in educational and technical terms. The educational process is defined here as the sum of all the material, technical, and organizational resources which contribute toward successful apprenticeships.

Modes of participation

Communities employ various modes of participation—either individually or collectively, and depending on their geographical position and/or organizational level. This study defines three such modes: (i) monoparticipation, which concerns only one type of contribution; (ii) biparticipation, which concerns two simultaneous forms of participation; and (iii) triparticipation, in which three forms are found simultaneously. These various modes of participation are not all found, as such, within a given community. Dominants exist, both with respect to a particular mode of participation used by communities (dominant mono-, bi- or triparticipation) and within the same mode of participation. This is the case with monoparticipation, for example, which presents dominants that may be financial, material, or human in nature.

Using this type of classification allows us to take into account the various forms of participation, and their specific traits, in terms of the resources available to each community and in terms of the degree of freedom that the community gives itself in choosing how to participate. Furthermore, the dominant form of participation can reveal the socio-economic and cultural realities of each specific environment. Thus, compared with northern regions, the southern and central regions of the country have long benefited from major government investment in the area of basic education. Today, with the advent of the APEs and the development of a cooperative culture, communities in deprived areas, notably those in northern regions, have been making significant efforts to provide basic education for their people, according to their available resources and to whatever new cultural needs may arise, such as functional literacy, teaching new agricultural technology, or health education.

Experiences with community participation

Our analysis of communities' experiences with participation in basic education provides us with the complementary dimension of the mechanisms underlying participation itself. These experiences include communities' initiatives and decisions, with respect both to the choice of location for basic-education facilities and to the ways in which they contribute and the ways in which they try to advance and sustain their acquired knowledge. In this context, our study addressed the following:

- the impact of specific temporal phenomena on communities' experiences: this refers to the appearance—over time, and at a given period—of a need that has led communities to an experience of participation in basic education;
- the formal and informal rules governing practices within communities, enabling people to manage their own affairs with a view to constructing and operating facilities designed to meet their shared basic education needs;
- the impact of education facilities: this refers to the positive impact and multiplier effect of the participation strategies developed by communities.

Factors facilitating and impeding community participation

The factors facilitating and impeding participation may be of various kinds (economic, demographic, sociocultural, religious, or institutional) depending on the context and the type of community concerned. Preceding community action, these factors facilitating and impeding participation in basic education must, if they are to be recognized as such (that is, as credible and valid), arise out of experiences that are real, and have been carefully reflected upon and expressed. Establishing how frequently such factors arise can thus confer a predictive value upon them.

4. *Methodological approach*

Our study sought to describe the phenomenon of community participation and to explore certain relationships between community participation and basic education. These relationships were expressed in the form of two hypothetical statements: (i) the higher the level of participation, the greater the access to basic education; and (ii) the higher the level of participation, the higher the level of quality in basic education. In order to obtain the information required to verify these hypotheses, we formulated the following nine questions:

- To what degree does the community participate in basic education?
- How does the community participate in basic education?
- What are the experiences of communities in their involvement in basic education?
- Does the level of community participation vary according to the economic viability of the community?
- In what way(s) does the level of community participation influence access to basic education?
- To what degree does the level of community participation affect the quality of basic education?
- What are the factors that facilitate and/or impede effective community participation in basic education?
- What do communities think about the responsibility to create access to basic education?
- To what extent are communities aware of their need to participate fully in the development of basic education?

For each question, the concepts were expressed in terms of variables, indicators, and possible relationships between the variables. For the researchers, however, the hypotheses required that they take a snapshot of two different types of reality, rather than establish causal relationships between different phenomena, in order to initiate measures with the expectation of achieving specific results. In this sense, our study was more exploratory and descriptive in nature than experimental, and this approach was particularly appropriate given the fact that in Benin, the complexity of participation is still largely undefined. We have endeavored to find an answer to the different research questions at every stage of our analysis.

a. Analytical model and definition of variables

It is possible to establish a hierarchy of the various forms of participation. The resulting trend ranges from strong participation to weak participation, and vice versa. The level of community participation was assessed in terms of the dominant form of participation in a community or a given survey area and in terms of the variety of forms of participation (mono, bi-, and tri-participation). The variables used in our study were community participation, access to basic education, and quality of basic education. Within the overall context of the study, community participation in education is the independent variable, while access and quality are its dependent variables. However, with regard to the community or area, participation was considered as a dependent variable, and our study sought to verify the existence of a variation in participation according to the types of community or area. With regard to economic viability, participation was considered, here too, as a dependent variable, and our study sought to determine whether the level of participation was a function of the economic viability of communities. Lastly, with regard to access and quality, the level of participation was considered as an independent variable. These interactions between participation, access, and quality constituted the core elements of our study.

Access, as a dependent variable of the study, was defined as a set of possibilities generally offered to satisfy the basic education needs of a population or community. These possibilities include: (i) the existence of adequate school facilities, recognized as such by the community or having a legally recognized status; (ii) the functional availability of these infrastructures; (iii) geographical accessibility of basic education services; (iv) accessibility linked to the available resources of the communities using the services; and (iv) the optimal use of such capacities by the community, measured by students' attendance and schools' retention rates.

The quality of basic education is reflected in the interplay between the response to the basic-education needs of individuals and the community, and the means employed and the conditions established with a view to satisfying those needs. As a dependent variable of the study, it was defined as a measure of: (i) the degree to which the basic education needs of the student and the community are met; (ii) the quality of the physical inputs that make up the learning environment; (iii) the quality of the educational environment, which is reflected in various ratios, such as the number of students per teacher, the number of books per student, and so forth; (iv) the returns, which take into account the degree of success and rate of learning. This is measured by tests of knowledge in French and mathematics, given in the first year of the middle grades (5th year of primary school) and in the preparatory grade (2nd year of primary school); and (v) the capacity of the student to adapt to social change.

b. Population sample

The study was carried out by a team of interviewers and two senior researchers, assisted by a technical committee responsible for scientific coordination. It covered the entire national territory of Benin, which was divided for the purposes of the study into six survey areas, according to criteria that were essentially socio-economic and cultural in nature (see Figure 1: Geographical distribution of study areas, and Table 1: Population sample, on the following pages). From a socio-economic viewpoint, the study took into account the main activities of each area, and their relationship to the geographical characteristics of the area and to groups' sociocultural and linguistic traditions.

The target population consisted of partners in education systems and community schools: men and women who had been living within each environment for a certain period of time. They notably included: members of the community, officers and administrators of community schools, students' parents, teachers, students in the formal and informal sectors, and opinion leaders.

The distribution of themes in the survey areas was carried out according to: (i) socio-economic activities: small-scale fishing, farming, animal-breeding, crafts, and trade; (ii) the residential environment: urban, semi-urban, rural; (iii) the sector or field of education: formal and informal; and (iv) the dominant linguistic groups in each area.

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of study areas

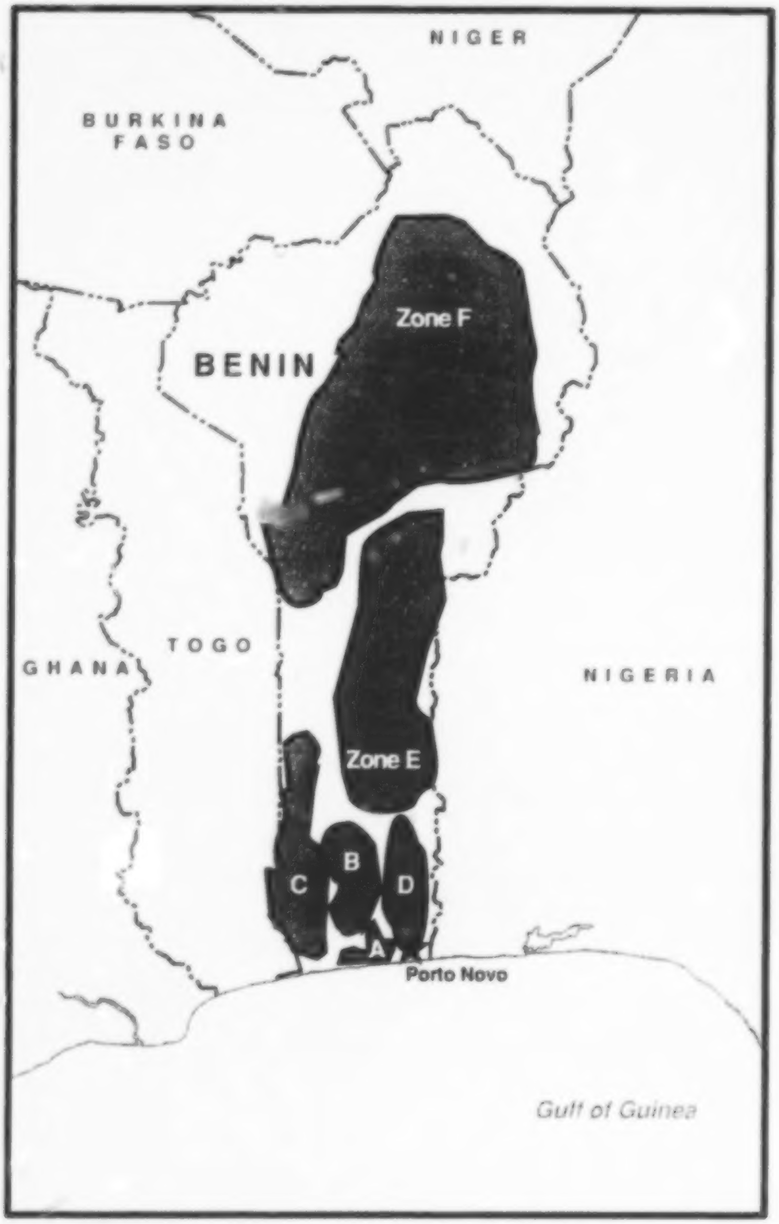

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Table 1: Population sample

AREAS	Socio-economic activities	Distribution by education sector	Size by area	Distribution by type of environment N	%	Linguistic group	Interviewer	Interviewer code	Towns (for information only)
A Atlantique-South Ouémé-West	Small-scale fishing Farming	F (60%) 24 I (40%) 16 F (70%) 35 I (30%) 15 F (60%) 66 I (40%) 44	200	U 40 SU 50 R 110	20% 25% 55%	Fon Goun Aizo Tori Toffi Wémè	HOUNSA Laurent	Hou/A/4 Hou/A/7	Cotonou-Ouidah Calavi-So. Ava Torri-Bossito Allada-Aguégué Bonou-Dangbo Adjohoun
B Atlantique-North Zou South-East	Farming Crafts	F (60%) 30 I (40%) 20 F (70%) 49 I (30%) 21 F (60%) 40 I (40%) 32	200	U 50 SU 70 R 80	25% 35% 40%	Fon Fon	ZANNOU Jacques	Zan/B/4 Zan/B/8	Toffo-Sèhouè Covè-Zagnanado Abomey-Bohicon Zokpota and surrounding area
C Zou South-West Mono	Farming Trade	F (60%) 18 I (40%) 12 F (70%) 49 I (30%) 21 F (60%) 60 I (40%) 40	200	U 30 SU 70 R 100	15% 35% 50%	Fon-adja Mina	AHOVI Antoinette	Aho/C/8 Aho/C/6	Athiémé-Comè Bopa-Dogbo Savalou Bantè and surrounding area

* F = Formal I = Informal
U = Urban SU = Semi-urban
R = Rural

Atacora 3
Atlantique 4
Borgou 5

Mono 6
Ouéme 7
Zou 8

* NB: Urban environment 1/3
Rural environment 2/3

Table 1 (continued)

AREAS	Socio-economic activities	Distribution by education sector	Size by area	Distribution by type of environment N	%	Linguistic group	Interviewer	Interviewer code	Towns (for infomation only)
D Ouémé	Farming Trade	F (80%) 24 I (20%) 06 F (60%)102 I (40%) 68	200	U 30 SU R 170	15% 85%	Yoruba Fon Goun Nagot Yoruba	FAGBEO-URO Véronique	Fag/D/7	P/Novo-Avrankou Adjarra-Ikpinlè Kétou-Sakété Pobè-Ita. Djèbou and surrounding area
E Zou-North Lower-Borgou	Farming Trade	F (80%) 24 I (20%) 06 F (60%)102 I (40%) 68	200	U 30 SU R 170	15% 85%	Yoruba Dendi Sabè Idacha Dendi	BALOGO-UN Edouard	Bal/E/8 Bal/E/5	Dassa-Savè Kilibo-Ouèssè Glazoué Tchaourou Parakou
F Borgou-North Atacora South-East	Farming Animal Breeding	F (80%) 32 I (20%) 08 F (60%) 96 I (40%) 64	200	U 40 SU R 80	20% 80%	Dendi Bariba	SALIFOU Siba	Sal/F/5 Sal/F/3	N'Dali-Nikki Bembèrèkè Kandi-Banikoara Djougou Bassila

* F = Formal I = Informal
U = Urban SU = Semi-urban
R = Rural

Atacora 3
Atlantique 4
Borgou 5

Mono 6
Ouéme 7
Zou 8

* NB: Urban environment 1/3
Rural environment 2/3

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Our grouping of the main socio-economic activities produced three socio-professional categories, which in turn made three types of community: (i) the community of farmers (farmers, animal breeders, fishermen, and forestry workers); (ii) the community of artisans (carvers, blacksmiths, basket-makers, and other craftsmen); and (iii) the community of tradesmen (wholesalers, retailers, transporters, dealers, and merchants). The survey areas were named according to the predominance of one or another activity within each respective environment. Note that the three kinds of socio-economic communities addressed by the survey are represented in six natural areas and form the same number of homogenous communities. In fact, a tendency exists for each population to perform the same types of activity according to the particular ecological conditions prevailing in each living environment.

Furthermore, the grouping of these populations and the way in which they are distributed around the various regions, follows a certain linguistic and cultural affinity. Thus, farmers and other skilled workers are found in virtually every part of the country, the inhabitants of Benin's southern coasts prefer fishing (areas A and C), those in the north of the country are animal-breeders (area F), those in the central regions are mainly artisans (area B), and those in the southern and central border areas are traders (areas D and E). Each of these groups has a corresponding type of language or kinship, representing a means of cultural integration. Because it proved easier in methodological terms, our analysis focused on the six areas surveyed.

In view of the diversity of the parameters used to define the survey areas, and especially in view of the fact that 70 percent of the country's population lives in a rural environment (MPRE/INSAE, 1994), our sample was adjusted accordingly. Thus, the size of the sample per area was weighted according to the degree of urbanization in the towns. It was also determined according to categories of target populations: (i) the "community" sub-population, of a theoretical size of 200 people per area, includes two population categories: members of the community (men and women having lived for at least 3 years in the environment), on the one hand, and parents of students on the other. They represent respectively 2/3 and 1/6 of the total population per area, or 166 people; and (ii) the rest of the sample (34 people) comprises administrators of decentralized facilities and heads of formal and informal basic-education centers. They each represent 1/12 of the total population per area. Another target category is the school population, who were given tests of knowledge in French and mathematics. It should be stressed that this sector of the population is of interest only in the sense that it was used to measure the quality of basic education.

Overall, the sample consisted of 4,700 respondents, of whom 1,048 were adults and 3,635 were Grade 1 (CP) and Grade 5 (CM1) students (a third of whom were from urban environments and two-thirds from rural environments). The adult respondents were all over 30 years old; 76 percent were male, and 24 percent were female; 63 percent had a basic education; 6 percent were still in school; 31 percent had never been in school. The study concerned literacy centers (19%), public and private schools (35%), orphanages (2%), and vocational training centers (44%).

c. Data collection and analysis

Data collection took 33 days. The most important features of the process were: (i) the variety of data-collection tools involved: questionnaires, tests, and information forms; (ii) the way the tools were administered: individually and/or collectively; (iii) the collection method: group discussion, interview, observation, and documentary research; and (iv) the means used to control the quality of the information gathered: sample table, "interviewer code," headed notepaper, and survey report.

Two categories of research tools were designed, tested, and finalized by the senior researchers, with the help of specialists in formal and informal education:

- The questionnaires functioned as a support tool for the direct interview. There were five different questionnaires, which were aimed at the members of the community. They were tested by the interviewers, during their training period, on a sample of 42 people in an urban environment and 14 people living in surrounding villages. This test enabled the interviewers to estimate how much time would be needed for the survey as a whole. It also became apparent that the interviews were much shorter when conducted in the local language than when they were conducted in French.

- The knowledge tests were designed to assess the "quality" variable of the study. They consisted of a set of standardized tests, developed by evaluation specialists on the basis of the level attained by the school curriculum in mathematics and French for Grades 1 (CP) and 5 (CM1). These two grades were chosen because the level of school retention in Grade 1 is among the lowest, and the level at Grade 5 is relatively high. Each test included an exercise book for the students and an administrative guide for teachers. Before giving the tests, we held awareness-raising meetings for senior staff, teachers, and students.

The questionnaires were accompanied by several forms, which addressed the following: (i) experiences with participation in the survey areas; (ii) the measures implemented by the members of the community to promote basic education; and (iii) the factors impeding or encouraging community participation. The interviewers were also provided with a number of other technical forms: (i) to help them plan and report on their work; (ii) to enable them to note down any additional information not covered in the questionnaires; and (iii) to enable them to take notes about any organized facilities, agencies, or resource persons they encountered in the field.

The interviewer training consisted of two workshops. Interviewers were first given orientation and instruction in the subject and goals of the research, and then were made ready to conduct the survey in the field.

The "community" and "parent" questionnaires were administered individually to 857 people, including 642 members of the community and 215 parents, for an average of 143 questionnaires per area. The "administrator" questionnaires (83 of which were completed) and "school" questionnaires (108 of which were completed), were completed by 200 people (several school principals and administrators completed one questionnaire), for an average of 32 questionnaires per area. The "opinion" questionnaire, which was designed to produce a scale of community attitudes towards community participation in basic education, was completed by 464 people, who were distributed among the six sample areas. The forms accompanying these questionnaires, aimed at the members of the community, notably included: (i) "experiences with participation;" (ii) "actions to promote basic education;" (iii) "factors impeding and facilitating" basic education; and (iv) "NGOs and agencies involved in community participation activities."

Lastly, the achievement tests in French and mathematics aimed at Grade 1 and 5 pupils, were administered in two urban schools and two rural schools per area. Overall, 1,795 girls and 1,840 boys took the tests, including 1,749 from the fifth grade and 1,886 from the first grade.

Data processing was a two-stage operation, involving: (i) manual processing, which in the case of all the data-collection tools consisted of sifting through and codifying qualitative data in order to attribute different modalities to the cardinal numerical values; and (ii) computer processing, which involved entering quantitative data into DBASE III+, and then transferring them to the software SPSS/PC+. All the data were then printed out, so that any errors in data entry could be corrected. The different variables were then cross-tabulated. The data related to the attitude scales were processed with QSORT, a program used to sort qualitative statements.

Institutional backing for our study was provided by the National Institute for Training and Research in Education (INFRE), and this made it possible to overcome a number of obstacles: (i) the reluctance of officers and administrators of community and educational facilities to receive the interviewers; (ii) difficulties encountered in moving freely (by day and by night) around the survey areas; (iii) the lack of technical and logistical support provided for the interviewers by regional educational directors; and (iv) the lack of confidence felt by respondents and their sense that they might not be able to participate effectively in the survey.

Despite this institutional support, we did encounter certain difficulties, both in terms of the methodology and in terms of the practical survey work. With regard to the methodology, we should note the following: (i) because of our concern to verify all the variables of the study and to guarantee the quality of our data, we prepared a large number of different items, and it was very difficult to organize them into a questionnaire; (ii) the difficulty of administering two kinds of research tool (information form and questionnaire) on the same subject, without broadening the field of investigation, led us to include certain shared items in one or the other research tool and regard them as having the same weight when administered to different people belonging to the same community; (iii) the variety of targets and data-collection tools made it hard to select a particular sampling method for our work (although the combination of methods used did address the various scientific demands of the survey); and (iv) lastly, funding and organization of the research were not continuous. The fact that the process of sifting through and analyzing the data occurred two years after the data were collected did not make it easy to coordinate the timing of the various tasks involved in the research. Apart from the fact that the data were no longer recent, it was also not possible to conduct a further complementary survey to validate the data. As for the difficulties involved in the practical survey work, we might note in particular our difficulties with commencing the survey and collecting data—problems that were mostly related to equipment and administration issues.

5. *Results*

Overall, the response rates by type of questionnaire were relatively high. The rate was 75 percent for the "community" questionnaire, 80 percent for the "parent" questionnaire, 78 percent for the "school" questionnaire, and 60 percent for the "administrator" questionnaire, giving an average response rate of 75 percent nationwide. The response rates recorded for the "administrator" and "school" questionnaires do not in fact reflect the large number of respondents who contributed to these questionnaires. With regard to the knowledge tests, the average response rate was 76 percent (73% for the fifth grade and 79% for the first).

a. Characteristics of communities

Our sampling method produced three relatively homogenous types of community, based on the main socio-economic activities: (i) community of farmers (35.5%); (ii) community of artisans (32%); and (iii) community of traders (17%). The other participants within each environment, who are not included in these three categories—notably senior officials from private and public administration, prominent citizens, and retired people—represent the remaining 16 percent. With respect to the type of residential environment (urban or rural) and the type of basic education (formal or informal), the communities were distributed over 24 clusters, or census areas, within six survey areas.

Economic viability of communities

At a national level, nearly 45 percent of the population suffer from malaria, 27.5 percent from diarrhea, 17 percent from bilharziasis, and 13 percent from dracunculosis (Guinea worm disease). Of the communities visited, 55 percent do not have enough money to pay for their health care. At an individual level, the rate is 90 percent. There are scarcely four public health facilities per 828 people, and fewer than two maternity beds per 800 women. The vaccination coverage rate is considered very low by more than 59 percent of respondents. Finally, the fertility rate is close to 7 children per woman, and the infant mortality rate is 168/1000.

Table 2: Economic viability of communities visited

Community social indicators	Areas					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Infant mortality rate (‰)	159.3	165	169	159	166	170
Birth rate	Low	Acceptable	Satis.	Acceptable	High	High
Vaccination coverage rate (%)	56.3	66	65	53	60	52
Main source of lighting	Electricity	Paraffin	Paraffin	Electricity	Paraffin	Paraffin
Main source of potable water	Pump	Well	Well	Pump	Well	Village waterworks
Housing situation	Highly satisfactory	Highly unsatis.	Unsatis.	Unsatis.	Unsatis.	Satisfactory

At a national level, the literacy rate is very low (28%). The reasons for this low level of education, both in the formal and informal sectors, are: (i) lack of interest among the population, which itself is a consequence of the government's lack of intervention; (ii) the inadequacy of the subjects studied; and (iii) the lack of teaching staff.

With regard to the environment and to housing, over 70 percent of the population do have access to potable water. However, 54 percent of the population use paraffin as their only source of light, and only 25 percent of Beninese have electricity. Overall, the housing situation is unsatisfactory in the areas surveyed. However, if one takes into account the demographic weight of big cities such as Cotonou (in area A) and Porto-Novo (in area D), the trend is reversed, and corresponds to the overall nationwide trend.

Community opinions and attitudes

With regard to access, 95 percent of respondents felt that they would lose something by not sending their children to school or to an apprenticeship. Despite the importance accorded to ancestors in Benin, 94 percent of the population would choose to pay their children's school or apprenticeship fees rather than pay fees for funerals or ancestral commemoration ceremonies. Respondents said that the responsibility of ensuring that a child attends school lay primarily with the parents (87%), then the community (10%), and then the government (2%). In terms of areas, these percentages differ only in area F: parents, 69 percent; community, 20 percent (the highest rate under this heading). The practice by which communities fund basic education through profits from cash crops is certainly not unique to this area.

With regard to basic education, respondents gave the following responses, in order of importance:

- The government and the community must work together to ensure proper functioning of basic-education facilities.
- Participation in basic education concerns the people as well as the government.
- Access to basic education for all should be mandatory.
- Whatever their occupations, parents have a responsibility to participate in the life of the school and must participate in its management.
- The government must build schools in all parts of the country.
- The community would do better to participate alongside the government in providing basic education.
- If the government accepts that it is parents who must build the schools, then it must allow them to participate in the decision-making process. On the other hand, if the government builds the schools, communities must be responsible for maintaining them and expanding them.

In all areas, these same opinions were expressed: (i) recognition of the virtues of school; (ii) the need for collaboration between the government and the communities, to create access and to improve the quality of basic education; and (iii) the desire to participate at all levels of decision-making.

b. Characteristics of participation

Overall, communities' experiences with basic education are recent ones: most occurred within the last ten years; 35 percent occurred in the formal sector, and 53 percent in the informal sector; in 12 percent of cases the sector was not declared; 59.5 percent emanated from communities, while 40.5 percent were initiated by participants from outside the community (NGOs, government, development partners). Four of the six survey areas (B, C, E, and F) were real testing grounds for experiences in basic-education participation, with a large number of agencies and NGOs involved in the field.

Choice of the form of participation

More than 75 percent of respondents stated that the community itself chose how it participated in the implementation of the community's schools and projects. In areas dominated by farming and craft activities, this proportion is particularly high (98% and 81% respectively). In areas dominated by trade and fishing, where Benin's most urbanized regions are located, this rate is 67 percent and 68 percent respectively.

However, whereas 60 percent of respondents stated that their choice of contribution was not a spontaneous decision, but was initiated by participants from outside the community (government, NGO), 40 percent said that the choice tended to emanate from the community. Major disparities exist between the areas surveyed. Ninety-five percent of respondents in area F said that the population alone chose its form of participation. Respondents in areas B, C, and E said that the population hardly ever made the decision as to its form of participation.

Table 3: General characteristics of participation, by area (in %)

	Source of experience		**Choice of the form of participation**		**Degree of participation in projects**			
Zone	*Community*	*Partners*	*Community*	*Partners*	*Community role*		*Individual role*	**Regulations (aware)**
					None	All		
A	78	<<	55	<<	16.0	27	68	63.0
B	>>	66	>>	94	20.0	6	76	73.0
C	>>	51	>>	100	16.0	3	52	43.0
D	97	<<	>>	53	15.5	7	27	13.5
E	55	<<	>>	92	12.0	27	43	17.5
F	>>	53	95	<<	5.0	86	61	100.0

Forms of participation in basic education

Participation in decision-making

Taking the initiative to set up schools

The government initiates the setting up of schools in 24 percent of cases, but decides on the location in only 15 percent of cases, and is solely responsible for their construction in only 11 percent of cases. For its part, the community initiates the setting up of schools in 29 percent of cases, decides where they will be located in 45 percent of cases, and is solely responsible for their construction in 23 percent of cases.

In most cases, the government and the community work together in constructing and determining the location of schools. Their shares are 32 percent and 26 percent respectively. The other participants (NGOs, development partners) take little part in decisions as to the location of schools.

Participation in the implementation of basic-education projects in the community

In the view of 76.5 percent of respondents, the community participated either fully or partially in the implementation of basic-education projects. Only 14 percent of respondents said that the community took no part. Significant differences emerged between urban and rural communities. Whereas 41 percent of respondents in urban communities said that their community took no part in the realization of projects, the figure was 7 percent in the case of rural communities. Differences were also apparent with regard to the different areas surveyed. According to 86 percent of respondents in area F, the community was entirely responsible for basic-education projects, while in all the other areas, the majority of respondents said that their community played only a partial role.

On an individual basis, 58 percent of community members participated in the implementation of basic-education projects in their community. This personal contribution consisted of: (i) attending meetings (54%); (ii) acting as negotiator or mediator (42%); and (iii) providing logistical support: making homes, furniture, food, or refreshments available (26%). The main reasons advanced by those who did not participate are: (i) not being invited to meetings (14%); (ii) being absent when activities took place (12%); and (iii) not being concerned (9%).

Participation in basic-education funding

Individual contribution to funding

Sixty-eight percent of respondents contribute to the funding of basic-education projects. Twenty percent of this population contribute in three ways (financial, material, and human), while 13 percent make a human contribution; 80 percent contribute less than 10,000 CFA francs, 21 percent supply construction materials, and 78 percent devote less than 7 days of unpaid work.

Community participation is more significant when it comes to the implementation and maintenance of schools: 90 percent of the population contribute to their funding; 30 percent of the population make financial, material, and human contributions; 20 percent make a material contribution; 80 percent give less than 10,000 CFA francs to funding, 23 percent supply construction materials, and 72 percent make a contribution in terms of physical work.

Nationwide, 63 percent of parents contribute less than 10,000 CFA francs per year toward the education of their children; 6.5 percent of parents spend more than 100,000 CFA francs, and among this group, there are three times as many men as women. All communities also provide material contributions, although there are major differences between areas, with the extreme cases being the communities in area A, who never contribute in 60 percent of cases, and communities in area F, which contribute in 100 percent of cases. Moreover, financial contributions are significantly higher and substantial in rural environments than in urban environments. Women make a significant contribution in terms of unpaid work, in most areas. Women's low level of financial participation, especially in rural areas, thus does not reflect their commitment to furthering the cause of basic education.

Community contribution to funding

Seventy one percent of respondents living in communities contribute between 100,000 and 500,000 CFA francs to funding, while 16 percent contribute more than 2,500,000 CFA francs; 41 percent of communities supply construction materials, while 62 percent contribute their physical work time. Area F, in the northern part of the country, is notable for its financial contribution: 67 percent of people contribute more than 2,500,000 CFA francs, while all communities in area D, in the south, contribute less than 500,000 CFA francs. Area F is also notable in terms of the human contribution it makes toward the construction of basic-education facilities: 73 percent of respondents devoted more than 28 days per year to this activity.

Table 4: Characteristics of basic-education funding, by area (in %)

Area	Nature of contribution to basic education				
	Financial		Material	Human	
	Individual < 10 K	Community < 500 K	Individual Never	Community < 1 week	Community > 4 week
A	86	74.0	60.0	61	32
B	91	93.0	30.0	56	3
C	97	86.5	3.0	81	19
D	97	100.0	22.0	100	0
E	71	77.0	12.5	79	16
F	91	16.0	0	22	73

Participation in the educational process and in school management

Sixty-six percent of respondents say that parents participate in the educational process, but that this participation is primarily a personal affair, mostly involving material contributions. Thus, parental intervention mainly takes the form of helping with the initial construction of facilities (68.5%) and, within the context of school management, to the expansion of facilities (17%), to the supply of materials (15%), to facility maintenance (17%), and to administration (14%).

Community participation in the teaching process is an exceptional, if not rare event. Ninety percent of respondents, in all areas, say that it is the administrative authorities (61% of cases) and senior educators (30%) who decide what will be taught. Community members take part in this decision-making process, or provide teaching or technical assistance, in only 9 percent of cases. The government's powers in this regard extend to the organization of educational programs, the development of teaching materials, the organization of the timetable, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and personnel management. In short, the individual has no say over how his or her financial or material participation is used.

Overall, community intervention in school management led teachers to change their methods in 48 percent of cases, but had no impact in 52 percent of cases. This community intervention was related to specific instances, including: (i) failure in examinations (24%); (ii) unacceptable behavior by teachers (32%); and (iii) corporal punishment (23%). These concerns indicate that people do at least feel that they have a say in managing the school.

Level of participation

Monoparticipation

Financial participation is dominant. Financial monoparticipation is found predominantly in areas D (15%) and E (22%), which are primarily farming and trading areas. Overall, however, the financial contribution in area D is rather low, with 94.5 percent of the population contributing less than 10,000 CFA francs to basic education. In area E, the contribution is 71 percent, the highest level of individual contributions in the entire sample.

Material participation is dominant. Although material monoparticipation is found mainly in areas A and B (at 7% and 5% respectively), the study shows that material contributions are rarely made in isolation, and generally accompany other forms of contribution.

Human participation is dominant. Human investment is an essential characteristic in area B: 55 percent of the population in this area say they contribute unpaid work to basic education, although, overall, 56 percent contribute less than seven days. To a lesser extent, human investment is also a feature of area C, but 81 percent of those contributing contribute less than seven days to this activity.

Biparticipation

Area A is particularly notable for this form of contribution: 71 percent of the population contribute toward the implementation of basic-education projects. Forty one percent of these contributions fall within the category of biparticipation, which mainly involves either material/human participation (21%) or financial/material participation (14%). Moreover, 60 percent of the population in area A never contribute toward the supply of materials: making this area the weakest in the whole sample, with regard to this form of individual contribution. Lastly, 86 percent make a financial contribution of less than 10,000 CFA francs. Biparticipation is also a salient feature of area E, where it is expressed in terms of financial and material contributions.

Triparticipation

Although triparticipation is found in all areas, in no case does it involve more than 13.5 percent of people, except in area F, where 72 percent have adopted triparticipation as the dominant mode of contributing to basic-education projects. From a financial point of view, 91 percent of those contributing in this area give less than 10,000 CFA francs. All people in this area provide material contributions, with 73 percent devoting more than one month of unpaid work.

Table 5: Characteristics of participation levels, by area (in %)

	Level of participation*					*Total particip-ation rate*
Area	*Monoparticipation*		*Biparticipation*		*Triparticipation*	
	%	including	%	including		
A	19		41.0	M-H 21	11.0	71
B	63	H 55	20.0	F-H 8	4.0	86
C	16	H 11	13.5	M-H 8	13.5	43
D	21	F 15	13.5	F-H 12	5.0	39
E	24	F 22	29.0	F-M 21	10.0	63
F	14		4.0	F-H 2	72.0	90

* H: human; F: financial; M: material

Participation by gender

With regard to monoparticipation, women are more prominent in the area of human contribution, while men contribute more in financial and material terms. With regard to biparticipation, women are more often involved in all activities requiring a human contribution: their participation in basic-education activities takes the form of financial support or essentially unpaid activities. By devoting much of their time and possessions to the cause of basic education, they demonstrate a level of commitment that corresponds to the resources and the place allotted to them by their environment. Women's participation in human terms is thus greater in predominately artisan areas. Also, with regard to human participation, women are the first to appear at the onset of basic-education projects, generally during the first two weeks after a project commences.

Index of the level of participation by area

Overall, two areas were characterized by strong personal contributions to basic education: area F, where 90 percent of the population had been involved in the implementation of basic-education projects, and area B, where 86 percent were involved. With 71 percent and 63 percent respectively, areas A and E presented a high level of commitment, while areas C (43%) and D (39%) presented a low level of commitment.

Communities' experiences of basic education

Formal and informal rules of participation

The increasing involvement of people in basic education has been reflected above all in the creation of APEs organized at local, regional, national, and federal levels. The APEs are endowed with legal and contractual status, and enjoy a privileged position as the intermediaries for government authorities and aid agencies. In addition to the mandatory requirement to pay for school supplies and teaching materials, a lump-sum financial contribution is imposed on parents, who must also bear the equipment and operational costs of the schools in their towns. This cost transfer of educational programs to communities is increasingly governed by administrative regulations. More than half of the population say they are aware of these regulations. Three areas are notable in this context: area F, where 100 percent of respondents say they are aware of the regulations, and areas D and E, where the rate falls below 20 percent, and where people seem to be little concerned with the regulations that govern them.

Alongside the APEs, many village groups and women's groups, organized into cooperatives, work to advance the cause of basic education, especially in the area of informal education (notably adult literacy and adult education).

Impact of experiences

Participation experiences initiated by village groups in certain regions of Benin (areas F and B especially) did have a certain impact on other areas. The literacy experience of the "DERANA" NGO, at Komiguéa in area F, is an illustration of the ability of certain community participation experiences to breathe new life into methods traditionally used as a way to participate in education in a specific region, and to create a new shared environment in which groups of rural citizens can initiate new experiences. The survey carried out among village groups in area F identified several actions of this type, which were financed largely through profits from cash crops. However, it would be premature to assert that community participation in education is sufficiently substantial and viable in this area to create access and to provide quality basic education.

c. Access to basic education

Operational availability of infrastructures

At a national level, 97 percent of communities were aware that basic-education facilities existed, with the exception of communities in area C. Also at a national level, in 80.5 percent of cases, a facility dedicated solely to education exists. Wherever these infrastructures do not exist, students attend classes: (i) in community infrastructures (56.5%); (ii) at the home of a community member (17%); or (iii) in the open air (3%). There are variations between the different areas, especially areas D and F, which have educational facilities in 100 percent of cases (whereas in area C, these facilities exist in only 50% of cases). At a national level, basic-education services are accessible all year round in more than 85 percent of cases. This average prevails in most areas, except in area D which, with 5 percent, presents a rather unusual situation.

Attendance and retention rates

The attendance rate at literacy centers is relatively high in areas E and F (80 percent), but does not rise above 60 percent in the other areas. Overall, the school retention rate (the ratio of students enrolled to students remaining in the local education system) is relatively high: over 90 percent in 64 percent of cases. The same is true of most areas, except in area F, where the rate is between 80 and 90 percent in 78 percent of cases.

Table 6: Characteristics of access, by area (in %)

Area	Availability of infrastructures *Awareness*	 *Dedicated facility*	 *Accessibility*	Attendance rate *(literacy centers)*	School retention rate *(90%+)*
A	97.0	70	74	60	81
B	94.5	78	89	58	86
C	70.0	50	56	57	88
D	94.0	100	5	60	100
E	92.0	85	80	80	52
F	94.5	100	100	80	22

d. Quality of basic education

The degree of satisfaction among students and the community

Despite an average literacy rate of around 29 percent, both at a national level and among the regions surveyed (except in areas B and F, where it is significantly higher) respondents considered the rate generally satisfactory. On the other hand, the great majority of them considered the enrollment rate to be unsatisfactory. Sixty nine percent of respondents said that literacy had a significant impact on the life of communities, by: facilitating communication between those being taught literacy (36%), helping them to manage their own affairs (35%), or providing psychological satisfaction through reading and writing (29%). Eighty five percent of respondents said that basic-education centers were, in their view, highly satisfactory in terms of the way they were run and the subjects taught there.

The learning environment and the teaching environment

At a national level, basic-education infrastructures present a level of organizational strength, viability, and resources that is satisfactory, in terms of providing a quality education. However, there are major differences between the various areas: in area F, conditions are higher than the national average in every respect, while in area E, conditions are very good; on the other hand, area D seems particularly disadvantaged, except with regard to recreation areas. Areas A, B, and C are at around the national average.

Conditions governing learning are more or less the same in most areas, and are generally good. Area F, however, presents an unusual situation. It has the best student/teacher ratio, but the worst student/seat and book/student ratios. Area E also has a book/student ratio that is significantly below those of other areas. The situation in area D seems to be unusual, in the sense that, whereas the physical environment is somewhat unfavorable, the teaching environment is relatively satisfactory.

Table 7: Characteristics of quality, by area

	Literacy Rate			**Level of satisfaction**				**Results** (grade out of 100)				
				Satisfactory/positive			*Weak*					
Area	<40%	<80%	>80%	Lit. rate	Lit. centers	Literacy impact	Enrollment	5th gr.	1st gr.	French	Math	Subject average
A	94.0	6	-	69	91.0	69	75	64.7	71.7	66.2	65.4	65.8
B	-	100	-	100	85.0	100	71	66.2	67.7	70.7	64.5	67.6
C	88.0	12	-	53	63.0	82	41	70.7	72.5	71.8	66.2	69.0
D	100.0	-	-	50	92.0	50	100	78.6	80.9	75.7	81.9	78.8
E	81.0	14	2	43	84.5	52	48	72.2	75.7	73.7	73.2	73.4
F	5.5	17	78	100	94.0	100	67	74.7	81.8	75.0	82.1	78.5

Returns

The achievement tests in French and mathematics in grades one and five produced good results overall. Areas D and F produced the highest success rates by grade and subject, while areas A and B produced the weakest results. In terms of the overall average, success rates at private schools were significantly higher than those at public schools (their respective overall test averages were 82/100 and 73/100).

e. Factors facilitating and impeding the development of basic education

In general, the main factors facilitating and encouraging the development of community participation are, in order of importance: (i) the profitability of productive activities, implying the availability of financial resources; (ii) the involvement of the community at each stage of the decision; (iii) the level of government aid, reflected in the abolition or regulation of school or learning fees; (iv) good results achieved by students at the end of their school years; (v) the community's will to develop; and (vi) the implementation of a strong institutional framework.

Moreover, the main factors that discourage, or fail to promote, the effective operation of basic-education facilities and thus tend to impede community participation are, in order of importance: (i) a lack of financial resources; (ii) neglect on the part of the authorities; (iii) certain religious practices (sequestration and religious confinement); and (iv) bad management, including administrative bureaucracy and the uncoordinated intervention of the authorities in local affairs.

6. *Analysis of results*

In order to reflect the complex nature of the variables involved in the phenomenon of participation, we can use two approaches to determine the degree to which different areas participate: (i) we can consider the forms of participation (mono-, bi-, or triparticipation) found in each area, as well as the total percentage of the area's population that is involved in these forms of participation. We thus produce the following ranking:

	Lower level		⟶		**Higher level**	
Area	D	C	E	A	B	F
Rank	6	5	4	3	2	1

(ii) we can create an equivalent weighting for each of the participation characteristics analyzed in our study (see Table 8 on the next page), for which we determine the rank of each area. This method produces the following ranking:

	Lower level		⟶		**Higher level**	
Area	D	C	B	E	A	F
Rank	6	5	4	3	2	1

Whichever method is used, area F shows the highest level of participation and area D the lowest level. Our discussion of the results of the study—in terms of the relationships between the different variables—will center on these two extreme cases.

a. Economic viability and level of participation

Although area F is marked by a high literacy rate and satisfactory housing conditions, its health indicators are the worst in the entire sample. On the other hand, area D has low literacy and housing rates, but health indicators, which (in relative terms, and notwithstanding its vaccination coverage rate) are among the best of all. Only area A, where the level of participation is high, and where all the viability indicators are relatively good, might suggest a positive link between the level of participation and economic viability. There is no conflicting example of an area with a low level of participation combined with a set of poor indicators. Moreover, even though the standard of living varies from one area to another, it is far from satisfactory when it comes to the country as a whole. In the absence of a reference base of indexes for standard of living, it is hard to make an accurate assessment of the relationship between the level of participation and the economic viability of communities. Ultimately, our study was not able to establish a clear relationship between the level of participation and the economic viability of communities.

b. Level of participation and access

Although most indicators related to access revealed a satisfactory situation with respect to the availability and geographical access to infrastructures, study data suggest that participation has only a limited impact on access. In area F, a high level of participation is linked to a high literacy-center attendance rate (80%), permanent geographic accessibility of all basic-education infrastructures, as well as total availability of facilities dedicated to educational purposes, and yet it does not seem to be linked to a higher rate of school retention (its rate is the lowest in the entire sample). On the other hand, in area D, a low level of participation is linked to a low attendance rate in literacy centers and a rate of physical access to education infrastructures that is close to zero (5%) but, just like area F, full availability of facilities dedicated to educational purposes and (unlike area F this time) a high rate of school retention (the highest in the whole sample).

Table 8: Ranking of areas by characteristics of participation, access, and quality

Area						
F	E	D	C	B	A	
1	3	6	4	2	5	**Literacy level**
						Characteristics of participation
4	3	1	5	6	2	*Source of experience (community)*
1	4	3	6	5	2	*Choice of form (community)*
1	5	6	4	2	3	*Regulations (awareness)*
1	2	4	6	5	3	*Participation of entire community*
3	5	6	4	1	2	*Individual participation*
1	3	4	3	5	6	*Material supply*
1	4	6	3	5	2	*Human participation 28+ days*
1	3	6	4	5	2	*Financial participation*
1	4	6	5	2	3	***Participation level (mono, bi, tri)***
						Characteristics of access
1	1	2	4	3	2	*Attendance at literacy centers*
6	5	1	2	3	4	*School retention*
1	3	6	5	2	4	*Access to facilities*
1	2	1	5	3	4	*Dedicated education facilities*
						Characteristics of quality
1	5	4	3	1	2	*Satisfaction with literacy level*
3	2	6	1	4	5	*Satisfaction with enrollment rate*
1	5	2	6	4	3	*Satisfaction with basic education*
1	2	6	5	3	4	*Quality of infrastructures*
1	6	5	3	4	2	*Teacher/student ratio*
5	4	3	1	2	3	*Student/seat ratio*
4	4	1	2	1	3	*Student/book ratio*
2	3	1	4	5	6	*Results (French, mathematics)*

Certain characteristics of these two communities can offer further clues to the link between participation and access. Area F presents the highest literacy rate in all the survey areas, decides alone on its form of contribution in more than 95 percent of cases and, with regard to its attitudes, believes that parent participation is essential in managing schools. Area F is characterized by a population of farmers and animal breeders who have a tradition of cooperative activities. In view of the government's control over the management of the educational process in the formal sector, it appears likely, given the above data, that people in this area focus on the informal sector, where they have greater room to maneuver and where the utilitarian character of the basic education system is perhaps more in tune with their general approach to life. In this sense, one can talk in terms of a positive relationship between level of participation and access in area F, which supports the research hypothesis.

Area D, which presents the lowest literacy rate in the whole sample, allows partners to decide on its form of contribution in more than half of cases and, with regard to its attitudes, considers that the government and the community must contribute together to ensure the proper functioning of schools (but considers it almost as important that the government should be responsible for building them). Area D comprises a population of tradesmen, whose children do not suffer the same constraints as those of the farmers and animal breeders. Here, too, it seems probable, in the light of the above data, that people in this area focus on the formal sector (they 97% of basic-education participation experiences) and that the level of participation, al low, when channeled to the formal sector, produces positive effects in terms of the availab educational facilities and school retention. In this sense, one can speak, here, too, of a p relationship between participation and access in area D, although it is expressed differen area F. This underlines the importance of cultural and socio-economic variables to the sp nature of communities' involvement in basic education.

c. Level of participation and quality

Again, the study data suggest that participation has a limited effect in terms of quality. area F, a high level of participation is linked to high degrees of satisfaction with the literacy ra and the functioning of schools (the highest such rates in the sample), a positive impact of literac on the people (the highest in the sample), a learning environment of high quality (the best in th sample), as well as high results by students in the achievement tests and the highest ratio o teachers to students. In this case, the positive relationship between level of participation and quality seems to be proven. On the other hand, the level of satisfaction with the enrollment rate is not high, and the student/seat and book/student ratios are the worst in the sample. In area D, the low level of participation is linked to low degrees of satisfaction with the literacy and enrollment levels, as well as a learning environment of a very poor quality (the weakest in the entire sample). The positive relationship between level of participation and quality seems to be demonstrated once more. And yet, the low level of participation is also linked, in the case of area D, to the best results in the whole sample, a satisfactory teaching environment, and a high rate of satisfaction with schools.

To understand better the relationship between the level of participation and the quality of basic education, we must once more take into consideration the other variables displayed in terms of access. We must also consider that community participation is very limited with regard to the teaching process, an important determinant in terms of learning. Lastly, we must also consider the nature of the schools in each respective area, notably the private schools, where returns are far higher than those in the public schools. To what extent does the sample in area D include more of this type of school than area F? This might explain the comparable returns achieved in area D and area F, despite levels of participation that are very different overall. Unfortunately, the survey data in this context are not able to support the analysis. Nonetheless they do suggest a possible orientation for future research, and increase the importance of the "study on private teaching" proposed under the new institutional framework proposed by the government.

The positive relationship between the level of participation and the quality of infrastructures is not in doubt, and can be seen in most areas. This is not surprising in view of the nature of community participation, which still seems to be characterized by a traditional arrangement in which the government initiates the setting up and running of basic-education facilities, and communities help out by paying secondary costs related to school supplies and so forth. The links between the level of participation and returns by students on the achievement tests and between the level of participation and the teaching environment (in the case of area A, the latter relationship is positive) are harder to prove conclusively.

Certain constraints do have the effect of distorting this latter relationship, notably the schools' regulatory framework. It is significant that people in area F are those most familiar with the

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school regulations but also those who most seem to approve of informal educational facilities. To what extent do these regulations hamper participation? The results of our study showed that the traditional framework, in which the government was solely responsible for creating educational facilities, has been profoundly disrupted. Nowadays, the initiative to set up facilities stems largely from the community, and one might expect that the community will participate in decision-making at each stage of creation and operation. However, this is rarely the case, especially in the area of formal education, where the decision-making power remains firmly in the hands of the government and of the public authorities, who still enjoy a monopoly when it comes to defining programs and awarding teaching qualifications.

There is, in fact, a problem with the way power and authority are shared by the community and the government in their control of the educational management process encouraged by the rise of the private sector. The degree to which parents understand the significance of individual and/or collective contributions to basic education depends on whether their participation occurs in the private or public sectors. Furthermore, people are becoming increasingly involved in the affairs of the government, by paying the wages of teachers whose contracts have expired. They cannot recruit teachers directly, because they are forbidden to do so by law and the regional school superintendent is generally not prepared to recognize the new recruit. The rise of the private sector will no doubt help promote a growing awareness of the weight community contributions make to the basic-education sector and the need for a more determined contribution by communities to managing the educational process. Even if, in Benin, participation cannot be described as voluntary, communities are eager to take an active part in resolving problems concerning the satisfaction of their basic-education requirements. This is a sign of communities' growing autonomy with regard to decision-making in basic education. However, the picture continues to be dominated by the inhibiting forces of the exclusive bureaucratic tradition of the "authorities."

d. Experiences with, and attitudes toward community participation

Community experiences with participation in basic education are encountered in most parts of Benin. They are numerous and varied and developed along with the acute, persistent economic crisis that has swept the country. They have expanded to some extent in northern regions, where they are manifested in the form of a regional solidarity, backed by substantial revenues from cotton production. In the country's southern areas, some very interesting experiences have been implemented under the auspices of agencies working in the field to promote basic education.

People are generally very aware of their responsibility to create access to basic education and are ready to take on that responsibility. They are also aware of the weight, and especially the powers of the government in realizing basic education initiatives, when compared to the scope and limits of their own participation. They are ready to work together with the government, based on a sound sharing of roles and well-defined responsibilities. Their commitment perhaps reflects the hopes inspired by basic education in terms of the community's overall progress toward greater development. There is, therefore, reason to fear that the persistence of the economic crisis, the current crisis in the schools, and the unemployment and under-employment among young people may ultimately blunt this commitment.

7. *Conclusions and recommendations*

a. Conclusions

Our study showed that the "voluntary" type of participation often referred to in theoretical studies is in fact a rare phenomenon. People participate in basic education in a partial manner, and even when they do organize themselves to participate, it is often at the instigation or initiative of participants from outside the community—notably the government and NGOs. However, the choice of the form of contribution to be made within the context of each project is essentially left to the discretion of the community. Moreover, the role played by the community in actions designed to promote basic education was revealed by a certain number of indicators. The initiative to create a school comes more often from the community than from the government or other external participants, considered separately. The same is true of decisions regarding the location and construction of facilities; these decisions are more often taken by the community than by the government.

Communities participate through three forms of contribution: financial, material, and human. The predominance of one or another of these forms of contribution (mono-, bi-, or triparticipation) is closely linked to the socio-professional activities of each community. However, it is notable that rural communities play a greater part than urban communities in realizing basic-education projects. Moreover, financial contributions are significantly higher and substantial in rural environments than they are in urban environments. The contribution made by women in terms of unpaid work is just as significant. Moreover, the participation of communities in managing education and in the educational process remains very limited, despite the remarkable dynamism of the APEs, which have now grouped themselves together into a single national federation.

In urban as well as rural areas, APEs constitute one of the most striking aspects of community participation in basic education, across all categories. However, the support they provide is not properly reflected in official statistics. With the development of democratic ideas, public authorities appear to be aware of the need to take the strength and weight of the APEs into account when defining and implementing basic-education policies. However, the valuable contribution made by the APEs in terms of the current political, economic, and social issues tends to be undermined by the pyramidal structure of their organization. We must seize the opportunity provided by the present national policies of decentralization and devolution of power, to strengthen the structures of APEs and other local organizations working to promote and develop basic education. This issue is so urgent and important that national and international partners are now endeavoring to sensitize and train APEs and provide them with material and financial support.

If the results of the study showed a generally positive relationship between the level of participation and access to, and quality of basic education, we must nonetheless stress the difficulties we encountered in backing the two research hypotheses. Quantitative analysis did not provide separate responses corresponding to these two statements, and simple qualitative analysis, which tries to determine relationships between the different variables, did not produce the expected results. However, in many cases, our observation of the relationship between the various areas of analysis showed that when the community or the government alone takes the initiative to create schools, the level of access is not necessarily high. On the other hand, with respect to the partnerships forged between the government and the community, when the latter initiates a project, the level of access is high. Thus, defining partners' respective positions in the supply of educational services can be a heuristic way of establishing effective links between community participation and access to and quality of basic education—especially since people are aware of their responsibility to create access and to help improve quality.

Finally, our study enabled us to identify certain difficulties of the current educational system and to stress the challenge presented by the involvement of communities, not only in the funding of the system, but also in the administrative and educational management operations. Thus: (i) schools are not really administered with a view to promoting continuity and sustainability—an approach that requires rigorous strategic planning; (ii) people are not accustomed to integrating schools within development projects; (iii) teachers and principals often do not have the management training that would enable them to frame their actions within a development perspective; (iv) the people are taking an increasingly active part in funding basic education, but this participation is significantly impeded by the weight of bureaucratic tradition; and (v) lastly, one of the constraints identified in the relationship between communities and public authorities or their representatives is the latter's reluctance to share decision-making powers.

We must therefore convince those representatives of public authorities of the need to trust the people and to administer alongside them, by sharing the responsibility of decision-making. We should put the spotlight firmly on the magical virtues attributed to decentralization and devolution of power as ways to transfer powers to the communities. More than anything else, what is required is a profound change of mentality, mainly among those who are responsible for formulating educational policies, and for planning and implementing programs.

b. Recommendations

- Develop awareness-raising and training programs for education leaders, so that they can play new roles as leaders and facilitators of community participation in basic education.
- Promote a government/community partnership for the development of basic education, covering material and financial aspects as well as purely educational aspects, by strengthening the capacity of people to identify their needs and to participate in setting up and maintaining basic-education facilities.
- Strengthen and enrich people's participation experiences through technical assistance measures to APEs and village groups, so that these groups can increase their management capacity, take on new roles, and make their presence felt with decision-making bodies.

Furthermore, our study, in providing a more precise definition of the phenomenon of community participation in the basic-education sector, has raised new questions, which might provide guidance for future complementary studies that the government could implement if it wishes to implement its new institutional framework in an effective manner. In this respect, we would recommend the following:

- The situation in area F needs to be examined in greater depth. A case study should be conducted in order to determine why substantial financial and material participation in basic education, implemented in an organized manner, does not necessarily inspire members to commit themselves to creating access and working to achieve higher school retention rates. We should be asking ourselves what are the needs of this population in terms of basic education, beyond the purely utilitarian role that they generally accord to this type of instruction. We should also ask ourselves how schools can be adapted to their environment, and thus how the teaching/learning environment can be adapted to meet students' needs.

- Specialists in educational economics should conduct complementary studies on the economic viability of communities and on the participation of women in the promotion and development of basic education.
- Links should be established between the study on private schools and the present study by highlighting the type of participation allowed by communities in these schools. An analysis should be made to discover to what extent the prevailing participatory mechanisms, if they prove to be responsible for the results achieved in this type of school, can help strengthen the public sector.
- The relationships between certain variables of the study should be studied in greater depth: notably the relationship between the literacy rate among the population, academic success, and the retention of students in the formal sector. In addition, attention should be given to the relationship between different variables of access and quality (between purely educational facilities and academic results; and between school retention and general educational environment), to develop an operational model for community participation and to open a debate on the concept of equitable access to quality education for all.

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Annex: Detailed tables

Table A1: Main economic activities

Survey area	Activities	Ratio
A	Farming – fishing	70.3%
B	Farming – crafts	59.9%
C	Crafts – fishing	58.7%
D	Trade	59.7%
E	Trade – farming	63.7%
F	Farming – animal breeding	67.5%

Table A2: Sources of experiences by survey area and type of socio-economic activity

Survey area	Main socio-economic activity	Source of experiences	
		Community	Others
A	Farming – fishing	78.3%	21.3%
B	Farming – crafts	34.4%	65.6%
C	Crafts – fishing	48.6%	51.4%
D	Trade	97.2%	2.8%
E	Trade – farming	55.0%	45.0%
F	Farming – animal breeding	47.1%	52.9%
Nationwide		59.5%	40.5%

Table A3: How the form of participation is chosen, according to survey area and main type of socio-economic activity

Survey area	Main socio-economic activity	Mode of choice: Initiated by the community (%)	Mode of choice: Initiated by parteners (%)
A	Farming – fishing	55.2%	44.8%
B	Farming – crafts	6.4%	93.6%
C	Crafts – fishing	-	100.0%
D	Trade	46.9%	53.1%
E	Farming – trade	8.3%	91.7%
F	Farming – animal breeding	95.2%	4.8%
Nationwide		**40.0%**	**60.0%**

Table A4: Participation in decision-making, by type of participant

Participant	Decision to set up an educational facility: *Initiative*	*Location*	*Construction*
Community	28.7%	44.9%	22.6%
State	24.3%	15.4%	11.4%
Others	3.7%	5.6%	7.6%
Combined effort	43.3%	34.1%	58.4%
Govt./community share		26.0%	32.0%

Table A5: Part played by urban and rural communities in the implementation of projects

Community	Wholly responsible	Played some part	Played no part
Urban	23.5%	35.3%	41.2%
Rural	35.7%	57.0%	7.3%
All	31.0%	45.5%	14.0%

Table A6: Part played by communities, by area

Area	All	Part	None
A	27.3%	56.6%	16.1%
B	6.4%	73.6%	20.0%
C	2.7%	81.1%	16.2%
D	7.1%	77.4%	15.5%
E	27.1%	61.1%	11.8%
F	85.8%	9.4%	4.7%
National	**31.0%**	**45.5%**	**14.0%**

Table A7: Financial contribution to the setting up of school facilities, by area

Zone	Amount (000 CFA francs)		
	Less than 10	*10 - 50*	*50 - 100*
A	86.0%	4.9%	9.1%
B	90.9%	5.5%	3.6%
C	97.3%	2.7%	-
D	97.5%	2.5%	-
E	70.8%	25.0%	4.2%
F	91.3%	2.4%	6.3%

Table A8: Human contribution to the setting up of school facilities, by gender (number of working days)

Gender	Duration of work		
	1 - 7 days	*7 - 28 days*	*28 days or more*
Men	78.0%	1.2%	20.7%
Women	83.2%	10.6%	7.1%

Table A9: Personal contribution to funding: material contribution

Area	Supply of equipment		
	Often	*Sometimes*	*Never*
A	5.7%	34.3%	60.0%
B	27.3%	42.4%	30.3%
C	54.3%	40.0%	2.9%
D	2.8%	75.0%	22.2%
E	47.5%	37.5%	12.5%
F	68.6%	31.4%	-

Table A10: Financial contribution of the community to construction of facilities

Area	Amount (000 CFA francs)			
	100 - 500	*500 - 1,500*	*1,500 - 2,500*	*2,500 or more*
A	74.1%	17.5%	2.1%	6.3%
B	92.7%	3.6%	0.9%	2.7%
C	86.5%	13.5%	-	-
D	100.0%	-	-	-
E	77.1%	14.6%	3.5%	4.9%
F	15.8%	9.4%	7.9%	66.9%

Table A11: Human contribution of the community

Area	Duration in days		
	1 - 7 days	*7 - 28 days*	*28 days or more*
A	60.8%	7.0%	32.2%
B	56.4%	40.9%	2.7%
C	81.1%	-	18.9%
D	100.0%	-	-
E	79.2%	4.8%	16.0%
F	22.0%	4.7%	73.1%

Table A12 : Personal contribution to the implementation of basic-education projects, by area and gender

Type of contribution	Area (%)						Gender (%)	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	M	F
Financial (F)	5.4	3.7	2.7	14.8	22.2	8.0	11.1	3.8
Material (M)	7.1	4.6	2.7	-	2.1	-	13.8	2.5
Human (H)	5.7	54.6	10.8	6.2	-	5.6	3.1	10.8
Material + human	20.6	7.4	8.1	-	2.8	0.8	5.4	19.1
Financial + human	5.7	12.3	5.4	12.3	4.9	2.4	8.2	12.1
Financial + material	14.2	-	-	1.2	20.8	0.8	21.8	8.3
F + M + H	11.3	3.7	13.5	4.9	10.4	72.0	7.6	3.8
% contributing	**71.0**	**86.3**	**43.2**	**39.4**	**63.2**	**89.6**	**71.0**	**60.4**

Table A13: Opinions on the changes brought by literacy, shown by area and in terms of the nation overall

Literacy rate	N*	A	B	C	D	E	F
Below 40%	62.7	93.8	-	88.2	100	81.0	5.5
Below 80%	18.0	6.2	100	11.8	-	14.3	16.7
Over 80%	19.3	-	-	-	-	1.7	77.8

* National

Table A14: Degree of satisfaction with literacy rate

Level of satisfaction	N*	A	B	C	D	E	F
Satisfactory	30.1	68.7	100	52.9	50	42.9	100
Unsatisfactory	39.8	6.3	-	11.8	-	14.3	-
Very low	7.2	18.7	-	11.8	50	29.0	-
Zero	22.9	6.3	-	23.5	-	21.8	-

* National

Table A15: Level of satisfaction with the enrolment rate (in %)

	N*	A	B	C	D	E	F
High	25.3	6.2	14.3	29.4	-	4.8	-
Satisfactory	32.5	18.8	14.3	29.4	-	47.6	33.3
Low	42.2	75.0	71.4	41.2	100	47.6	66.7

* National

Table A16: Attendance rate at literacy centers and school retention rate

Area	Attendance rate *(literacy centers)*	School retention rate > 90 %	*80 - 90%*	*70 - 80%*	*< 70%*
A	60%	81.3%	12.5%	6.2%	-
B	58%	85.7%	-	-	14.3%
C	57%	88.2%	11.8%	-	-
D	60%	100.0%	-	-	-
E	80%	52.4%	28.6%	9.5%	9.5%
F	80%	22.2%	77.8%	-	-

Table A17: State of basic-education infrastructures, by area (in %)

Characteristics	N*	A	B	C	D	E	F
Accessible year round	85.2	73.9	88.9	56.2	5.3	80.0	100.0
Secure doors	57.4	69.5	66.6	56.2	5.2	60.0	100.0
Recreation facilities	73.1	60.9	61.1	75.0	84.2	70.0	100.0
Sports area	38.0	39.1	27.8	37.5	5.2	50.0	83.3
Working latrines	44.4	26.0	61.1	31.2	31.6	45.0	91.6
Equiped with furniture	41.7	26.0	33.3	31.2	42.0	45.0	91.6
Built with durable materials	59.3	69.6	63.1	45.8	5.3	81.6	100.0

* National

Table A18: Ratios at educational facilities (in %)

Ratios		N*	A	B	C	D	E	F
Students per teacher	30 to 60/1	85.5	93.8	85.7	88.2	75	66.7	100.0
	Over 60/1	14.5	6.2	14.3	11.8	25	33.3	-
Seats per student	1 per 1	57.8	75.0	85.7	94.1	75	52.4	-
	1 per 2	42.2	25.0	14.3	5.9	25	47.6	100.0
Books per student	1 per 1	77.1	81.3	100.0	94.1	100	38.1	-
	1 per 2	7.2	12.5	-	-	-	9.5	88.9
	1 per 3	15.7	6.2	-	5.9	-	52.4	11.1

* National

Table A19: Distribution of averages by area, grade, and subject

Area	Grade		Subject		Overall average		
	CM1 (max. 20)	*CP (max. 20)*	*French (max. 20)*	*Math (max. 20)*	*Nationwide*	*Private school*	*Public school*
A	12.95	14.35	13.25	13.08			
B	13.25	13.55	14.15	12.90			
C	14.15	14.50	14.36	13.25			
D	15.73	16.19	15.15	16.39			
E	14.45	15.15	14.75	14.65			
F	14.95	16.36	15.00	16.42			
Nationwide					14.85	16.35	14.55

Table A20: Factors favoring and encouraging community participation, by area

Opinion	A	B	C	D	E	F
Availability of resources	74.1%	43.6%	73.0%	85.2%	84.3%	82.9%
Good results	9.8%	22.7%	16.2%	3.5%	7.7%	1.2%
Desire for development	15.3%	33.7%	10.2%	6.3%	12.8%	-
Others	0.8%	-	0.7%	0.7%	1.7%	3.1%

Table A21: Factors discouraging the proper functioning of schools

Opinion	A	B	C	D	E	F
Lack of financial resources	39.2%	46.4%	27.0%	43.2%	35.4%	35.4%
Neglect by authorities	16.8%	21.8%	16.2%	19.8%	22.0%	22.9%
"Backwards" religious practices	20.3%	18.2%	32.4%	13.6%	29.9%	25.0%
Bad management	14.0%	12.7%	15.3%	16.5%	11.3%	9.7%
Others	9.77%	0.9%	9.1%	6.9%	1.4%	9.4%

Chapter 5

Cameroon

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1. Context of the study

Africa has always been presented as a continent where collective values override individual values. Traditional education, based on a group teaching approach, is strongly rooted in a dynamic of community participation. Neither the conquest and division of Africa, nor the constant fear of *coups d'état*, which caused post-independence administrations to ban any effort to create community life, destroyed this community spirit. Following the crises of the 1980s and 1990s, Cameroon, like many other countries, suffered a decline in resources. In the face of strong population growth, it could no longer meet demand for education, necessary for the nation's development. In Cameroon, the government withdrew financially from education and passed on responsibility for education to the Students' Parents Associations (APE). At the same time, it issued general instructions defining the duties of the APE, excluding them from the conception, management, and evaluation of schools. The winds of democracy and decentralization, which blew in the 1990s, led people to reflect on sharing of roles and responsibilities of the various social actors in formal and nonformal education systems. The present study is part of a multinational effort conducted by teams from four member countries of the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA). Its goal is to promote multi-level and diversified analysis of the effects of community participation on access to and the quality of basic education.

2. Issues

After achieving independence in 1960, Cameroon became a federal state in 1961, when the former French mandate of the League of Nations was joined to the southern part of the former British Cameroons. In 1972, the federal Republic became a unified Republic, retaining both the

French and English languages. The Cameroon education system continues to be marked by the juxtaposition of the two educational sub-systems inherited from colonization. The various attempts made by public authorities between 1966 and 1995 to harmonize and unify these sub-systems did not produce the desired results. Hence, following the 1995 Education Convention, differences remain between the programs, assessment methods, and educational qualifications that prevail in English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroon.

The Cameroon education system is also marked by the following major characteristics: (i) basic education facilities that include nursery schools, for children 4 to 6 years old, and primary schools, for children age 6 to 13, with education spread out over a 6-year period in the French-speaking sub-system and a 7-year period in the English-speaking sub-system; (ii) a dramatic shortage of teachers, in both quantitative and qualitative terms; (iii) poor management of teaching personnel, which has created a class of workers who are frustrated and resentful, underpaid, and without career prospects; (iv) a dropout rate between the primary and secondary levels such that less than 40 percent of primary-school students go on to general or technical secondary education. Furthermore, at the national level, only 11 percent of school-age children go on to secondary schooling; (v) intermediary structures, such as the Rural Artisans' Groups and the Housewives' Groups, who are poorly equipped and poorly advised, and who are unable to play their role of as a force for the integration of young people into the cycles of production and development; (vi) a 38 percent national success rate in the various official examinations; and (vii) major under-financing: the share of the national budget devoted to education was only 6 percent in 1996-97 and less than 10 percent in 1997-98, even including sums allocated for higher education.

The questions of access to and quality of basic education in Cameroon occur within the context of the economic crisis that began in 1986, and the accompanying structural adjustment programs (SAP). Since 1986: (i) the government has seen the freezing and subsequent erosion of its ability to provide educational services, including construction of schools, maintenance of existing infrastructures, provision of teaching materials, recruitment of teachers, and training of teachers (suspended between 1989 and 1995); (ii) the education system is suffering from disaffection among its teachers, who are either taking early retirement or retraining for other sectors of activity; (iii) with their purchasing power hit by the structural adjustment programs (SAP), families are becoming more concerned by short-term food and health problems and are reducing their expenditure on education; and (iv) because of the growing cost of education, families stop buying school textbooks or withdraw their children from school. The main victims of this situation are children from disadvantaged groups—especially girls. Thus, questions of access and quality are directly linked to that of equity.

Faced with a progressive fall in school standards, parents lose confidence in the ability of public authorities to maintain the quality of basic education; hence the increase in the rate of children dropping out of school and the growing need for communities to make a contribution, to fill the void left by the public authorities. This community involvement is, moreover, supported by major policies that, since 1991, have sought to encourage local populations to become actively involved in the creation and management of schools and to associate local communities with the development of school programs that take into account local ideas and values, as well as the experiences and ways of life of marginalized groups (IRGC, 1991).

The Government of Cameroon is aware of the importance of involving communities in running the education system and, as early as 1979, through an inter-ministerial decree, officially recognized and defined the mandates of three structures directly involving communities in education: the Students' Parents Associations (APE), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), and cooperative schools. These overall task of these associations is acting as a catalyst for the interventions and the more or less voluntary contributions of students' parents, to improve the running of public and private schools around the country. In 1996, the government issued an inter-ministerial decree, which: (i) introduced new school fees payable by students in public schools and school fees payable by users toward the cost of maintaining the national education system; and (ii) created financial management committees at each public school facility. To what degree does this form of obligatory participation help to improve the education system? No evaluation of its impact has yet been undertaken.

The Convention of 1995 made clear that the school is not on the margins of society and that education policy must take into account the situation among all social strata of the population. What roles are communities able to play and envisage taking on, within the context of the decree of implementation that was inspired by the resolutions of the Convention on Education? In Cameroon, the answers to this question must respect the mosaic of populations, cultures, and ecological micro-climates that make up the country. This is the aim of the present study. More specifically, it seeks to examine the forms, levels, and types of community participation experiences existing in the different areas of the country with regard to basic education, to identify the factors that hamper or encourage this participation and, lastly, to reveal certain effects of community participation on access to and quality of basic education.

3. *Conceptual framework*

a. Basic education

In the spirit of the 1990 Jomtien Conference, basic education is defined here as the sum of all the knowledge, expertise, social skills, and awareness one needs to develop fully as an individual within a community. It includes all the elementary knowledge that must be mastered by members of a community to ensure their own personnel development and that of the community.

b. The community

The word *community* can mean many different things. For authors like Maelver and Page (1969), a community might consist of a pioneer camp, a village, a tribe, or even a nation. The community is a group whose members live together, share particular interests and common basic living conditions, as well as a "space" that embraces all of an individual's social and political relations, including his or her means of survival and those of the group. Drawing a distinction between the "functional community" and the "geographical community," Sarella Henriquez (1978) describes the characteristics common to all communities and the factors that tend to differentiate one community from another:

- With regard to common characteristics, communities are defined as organized population groups which: (i) coexist within a determined geographical area; (ii) present a certain degree of social and economic integration, due to shared experiences and similar behavior patterns; (iii) demonstrate a certain degree of awareness of the local unit; and (iv) share common social institutions that are more or less developed, and in which the institution of the school plays an important role.

◆ With regard to factors encouraging differentiation between communities, we note: (i) ethnic origin; (ii) cultures and sub-cultures; (iii) the local environment, whether rural or urban; (iv) the degree of social development; and (v) structural characteristics.

For the purposes of our study, the idea of community also refers to a broader scenario, which is rooted in the colonial philosophies of "indirect rule" (as practiced by the British) and "assimilation" (as practiced by the French). Thus, Udo Bude (1985), analyzing the functioning of primary schools between 1960 and 1970, compares the deep commitment to education shown by local communities within the English-speaking part of Cameroon, and the indifference of those living in French-speaking regions.

c. Communauty participation

The International Institute for Educational Planning (1981) defines participation, in its broader sense, as the active and responsible association of individuals in the decision-making mechanisms that concern them, and identifies three different types of participation:

1. nominal participation, which involves transmitting information to participants and perhaps also asking for their support regarding an action already decided;
2. consultative participation, which involves seeking the advice and support of participants, even if decision makers retain the power to determine the influence that participants may have on decisions;
3. responsible participation, which refers to a dialogue situation, in which the participants are genuinely able to influence basic decisions about the planned reform.

The concept of community participation is taken from the report of the WHO/UNICEF Conference, Alma/Ata (1978), which defines community participation as:

> a process in which individuals and families (...) develop their ability to contribute toward their own development and to that of their community. They thus achieve a better understanding of their own situation and are motivated by a desire to resolve their common problems. This enables them to be the agents of their own development, rather than confining themselves to the role of passive beneficiaries of development aid. This requires that they not feel obliged to apply traditional solutions when such solutions are inappropriate, and realize instead that they are free to be innovative in their search for appropriate solutions. They must acquire the ability to judge a situation, to weigh the various possibilities offered to them, and to determine what the nature of their own contribution might be.

According to Alastair T. White (1982), community participation is desirable in order to: (i) obtain a supplementary budgetary resource for governments; (ii) increase the possibilities for action through the mobilization of resources; (iii) reduce the cost of services provided; (iv) create a spirit of social interaction and unity; (v) provide a catalyst for new development efforts; (vi) develop a sense of responsibility and greater awareness; (vii) ensure that demand is genuine and appropriate; (viii) use local knowledge and skills; and (ix) reduce dependence on professionals.

In Cameroon, several forms of community participation in basic education need to be looked at and analyzed, to achieve an understanding of how they function. The following forms of financial and social participation are involved: (i) construction of school buildings; (ii) recruitment of teachers; (iii) coverage of certain teachers' pay; (iv) school fees, subscription fees and various contributions; and (v) voluntary and/or mandatory, individual and/or group contributions.

4. *Methodology*

Our study began with the hypothesis that the higher the level of participation, the higher the level of access and educational quality. In an effort to paint a detailed picture of the situation in Cameroon, our study sought to identify the effects produced on access to and the quality of education by certain types of participatory structure, types of activities engaged in, categories of community actor, forms of participation, and areas and types of community. Hence, in view of the diversity of Cameroon's communities, data were collected at a community level and interpreted within these communities—that is, as local data, peculiar to specific dynamic communities.

a. Analytical model and definition of variables

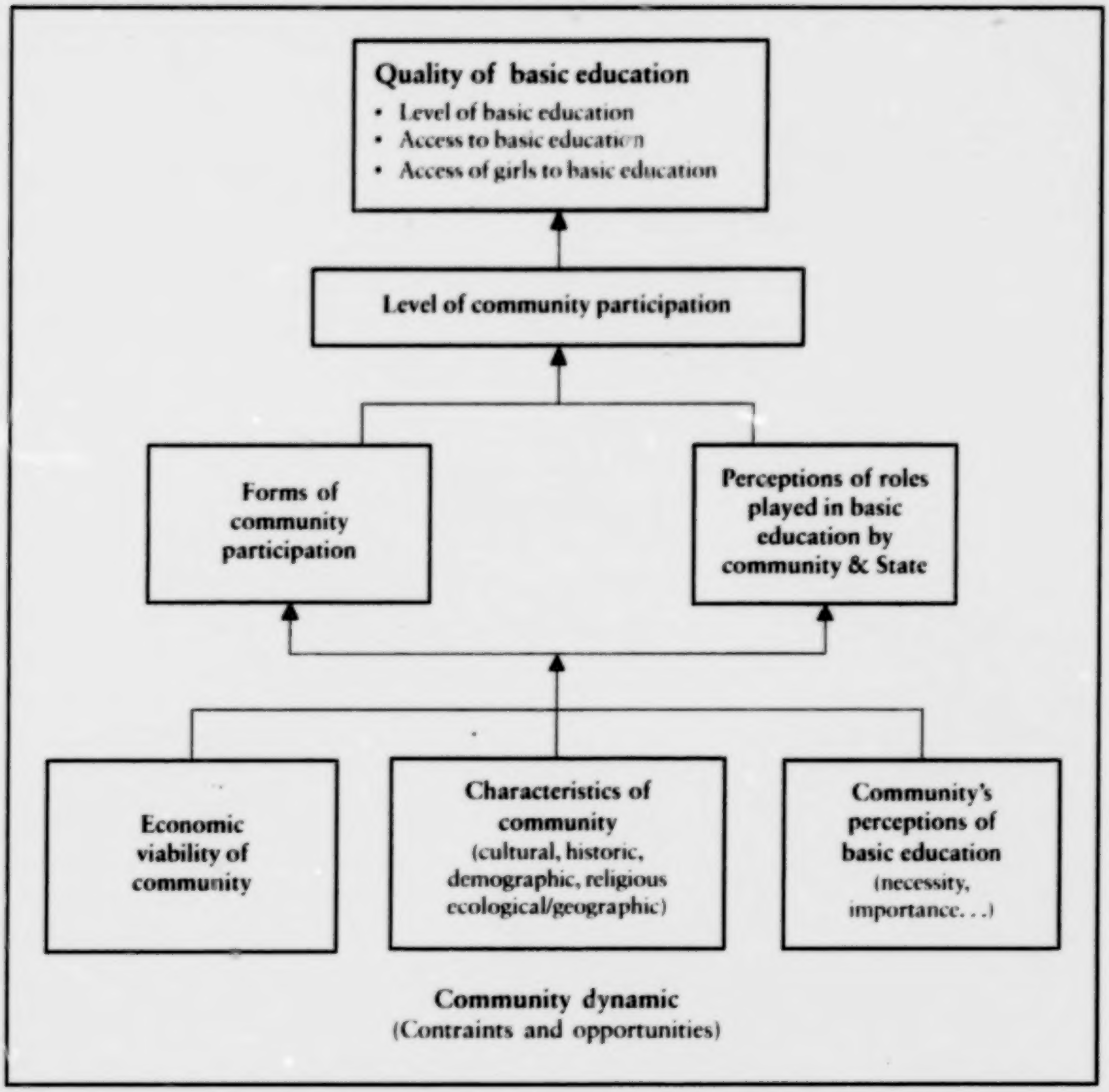
The ERNWACA research team approached the community as an integral unit. The team developed an analytical model that, within a given community, could identify the link between the observed levels of access to and quality of basic education, and the community dynamic concerned. The three major variables used were:

- access, defined in terms of school attendance rates among boys and girls, the number of basic institutions in the community, and the appropriateness of the infrastructures of those institutions;
- quality, defined as the ability of the student to master basic knowledge and skills, as measured by a practical-knowledge test;
- the level of community participation, defined as the constraints and opportunities offered by a community dynamic in terms of: (i) economic sustainability; (ii) socio-demographic and religious characteristics; (iii) perceptions of basic education and of the roles to be played by the community and the state; and (iv) forms of community participation.

We distinguished between three types of community, which functioned as units of measurement. In doing so, we took into account the homogenous nature of cultural values, revenue sources, and socio-demographic data.

- *The urban community.* This type of community is characterized by the diversity of its population and the large number of different professional activities. Because the members of its population are from many different places, the urban community has a diverse cultural fabric. Here, the leaders are those who hold the administrative power. The most common forms of cooperation are based on professional, political, and/or ethnic networks.

Figure 1: Analytical model


Quality of basic education
• Level of basic education
• Access to basic education
• Access of girls to basic education
Level of community participation
Forms of community participation
Perceptions of roles played in basic education by community & State
Economic viability of community
Characteristics of community (cultural, historic, demographic, religious ecological/geographic)
Community's perceptions of basic education (necessity, importance...)
Community dynamic
(Contraints and opportunities)

- *The immigrant rural community.* This type of community is located half-way between the town and the country. The local population has been joined by a diverse population lured by agricultural or agribusiness activities. The forms of production are mechanized. The immigrant population of this community presents two contrasting identities. Whereas traditional cultural values continue to enjoy a certain degree of homogeneity, it is the arrogance of modern values that predominates. The leadership here remains the sole preserve of those who control the means of production. Cultural values are not quite dead, but they do appear to have been usurped—not surprisingly—by the power of consumerism.

- *The homogenous rural community.* This type of community is characterized by homogenous cultural values, a population that lives mostly from agriculture, animal breeding, or small-scale trading. Its leaders are those who hold traditional power. Here, there remain vibrant, well-defined forms of cooperation, but they are gradually opening themselves up towards other types of institutions, with new forms: development committees, elite groups, and others.

Furthermore, in order to reflect the country's geographical, linguistic, and cultural realities, and its administrative divisions, our study defined five study areas:

Area 1: Northwest and Southwest provinces: Bamenda, Buea, and Muea
Area 2: Coast and Central provinces: Nkondjock, Mbalmayo, and Dizangué
Area 3: West provinces: Bafoussam, Foumbot, and Bazouindjon
Area 4: Greater North (Adamaoua, Northern, and Far Northern provinces): Ngaoundéré, Lagdo, and Tokombéré
Area 5: East and South provinces: Bertoua, Nyété, and Lolodorf.

b. Sample

In each of the five study areas, three communities were chosen (rural homogenous, rural immigrant, and urban), giving a total of 15 communities. Within each community, 160 people were interviewed. They were made up as follows:

- 100 members of the community;
- 10 community leaders;
- 10 basic-education officials;
- 40 students.

c. Data collection and analysis

The research team designed and pre-tested four data-collection tools to measure the three major variables in our study.

- Tool A: questionnaire on the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals with respect to basic education, community participation, girls' access to basic education and how these various elements have changed. The data produced by means of this tool are presented and discussed within a national context.

- Tool B: interview guide to the community dynamics identified and analyzed by community leaders (religious, political, traditional, and others). Used within the context of case studies, to explain the level of basic education observed through the actions taken under tool D.

- Tool C: school questionnaire, looking at various aspects of basic education, with regard to facilities, teachers, accessibility, the degree of vitality shown by school leaders. Used, like tool B, within the context of case studies, with a view to explaining the level of basic education observed through the actions taken under tool D.

- Tool D: practical-knowledge test, measuring the level of basic education of students in fourth grade (CE2) of formal institutions and students in nonformal institutions with at least three years of schooling. This test grouped questions under five themes deemed essential in terms of respondents' capacity to become agents of their own development: general knowledge, civics, hygiene-health, protection-security, and ecology-environmental protection. Using this tool, we were able to produce statistical data (averages, standard deviations) broken down by area of study and by type of community, and thus to estimate the national level. Tool D also made it possible to make a well-informed choice as to the communities to be used for case studies.

Lastly, the factors determining girls' access to basic education were identified by individuals, community leaders, and basic education officials, according to specific elements of tools A, B, and C.

Our data analysis techniques, which were both qualitative and quantitative in nature, consisted of: (i) constructing comparative tables; (ii) analyzing simple frequencies comprising proportions of respondents; (iii) calculating averages and standard deviations; and (iv) comparing averages. The first stage of our data-interpretation process consisted of reconstructing at a national level the data obtained for the different variables. We then studied specific cases of communities presenting particularities that were extreme (strong/weak) in comparison with those of other communities. The two principal particularities we took into account when choosing the communities to be included in our case studies were the level of basic education and girls' access to basic education.

5. Results

a. Quality of and access to basic education

Level of basic education

Based on the results achieved in the practical-knowledge test, the national average was 13.82 out of 25, representing a level of expertise of around 55 percent with regard to the basic knowledge and skills deemed essential to the personal development of respondents and of their community. The standard deviation is 3.59. Overall, 4.4 percent of respondents achieved a score equal to, or higher than 20, representing a level of expertise of 80 percent or more with regard to the essential knowledge and skills. Those who scored less than 5 made up 1.1 percent of respondents, representing a level of expertise of less than 20 percent. The results are not the same, however, across the different study areas or between the various types of community studied.

Thus, Area 5 (East and South) presents the highest level of basic education, with an average of 14.97, representing a level of expertise of around 60 percent with regard to basic knowledge and skills. However, the standard deviation was a little higher than the national average. This means that scores among respondents in this area showed greater disparity than scores in the country as a whole. On the other hand, Area 2 (Central and Coast) has the lowest level of basic education and a standard deviation level that is a little lower than the national level.

With regard to types of community, the urban environment produced the highest practical-knowledge test scores overall, with an average of 14.97 (more than a point above the national average). Next come immigrant communities, which are slightly below the national average, followed by homogenous rural communities, where the average was more than one point below the national average. Also, homogenous rural communities had the lowest standard deviation, while urban communities had the highest. In view of the comparison between the scores achieved by the urban and rural immigrant communities and those achieved by homogenous rural communities, it may be that population diversity, as a kind of opening out to the world, constitutes a determinant that is favorable to basic education. Table 1 presents a summary of the data collected.

Table 1: Summary of results for practical-knowledge test, by study area and by type of community

Average scores (out of a total 25) **and standard deviations**		Type 1 (Homogenous rural communities)	Type 2 (Immigrant rural communities)	Type 3 (Urban communities)	Total (National estimate)	No. of respondents
Area 1 (Northwest and Southwest)	Average	13.47	13.70	_16.20_*	**14.43**	151
	Std. deviation	2.88	3.12	2.19	2.99	
Area 2 (Central and Coast)	Average	13.20	_11.04_*	_13.72_*	**12.65**	149
	Std. deviation	2.30	3.56	3.58	3.40	
Area 3 (West)	Average	_10.47_*	12.65	15.13	**13.18**	146
	Std. deviation	4.07	3.22	4.80	4.51	
Area 4 (Adamaoua, North, Far North)	Average	_13.34_*	14.04	14.15	**13.85**	155
	Std. deviation	2.73	2.06	3.11	2.85	
Area 5 (East and South)	Average	12.31	_16.88_*	15.66	**14.97**	149
	Std. deviation	3.11	2.75	3.27	3.60	
Total (National estimate)	Average	**12.74**	**13.66**	**14.97**	**13.82**	750
	Std. deviation	3.13	3.62	3.64	3.59	
No. of respondants		246	241	263	750	

* Communities included in case studies

More specifically, comparison of data by study area and by type of community gives the following results:

- **Area 1** (Northwest and Southwest) covers two English-speaking provinces. The average achieved was 14.43. This represents a level of expertise of around 58 percent (higher than the national average). With a standard deviation of 2.99, the scores show little disparity among respondents: their level of basic education appears to be quite homogenous. Because of their culture, populations in this area have a strong tradition of community participation in all aspects of community life. The urban community in this area produced one of the highest averages in our study: 16.20, or a 65 percent level of expertise in terms of basic skills; and one of the lowest standard deviations. This points to a high level of homogeneity among respondents. The community concerned (Bamenda) was chosen as a case study. Although the average for the homogenous rural community in this area was below the national level it achieved the highest average in the sample for this type of community.

- **Area 2** (Central and Coast) presents the lowest average in all areas surveyed, at 12.65. This represents a 50 percent level of expertise with regard to basic knowledge and skills. No respondent scored more than 19, and yet this area includes a large proportion of towns, as well as a high density of schools. The urban community in this area also scored the lowest average for this type of community, just like the immigrant rural community, where the average is more than 2 points below the national average for this type of community. These two communities (Mbalmayo and Nkondjock) were used as case studies.

- **Area 3** (West) also produced an average below the national level: 13.18. This represents a level of expertise of around 53 percent. The standard deviation, at 4.51, reflects quite a high degree of disparity in the level of basic education. This is a surprising result, since this region is geographically quite dense, and the dividing line between town and country is often hard to discern. However, the urban community had an average that was higher than the national figure and a high standard deviation between respondents' scores. The homogenous rural community had the lowest average, not only for this type of community, but also for all communities addressed by our study. This community (Badzouidjon) was used as a case study.

- **Area 4** (Adamaoua, North and Far North), with an overall score of 13.85 (55 percent), scored an average that was slightly higher than the national level. Its low standard deviation of 2.85 showed the highest degree of homogeneity in terms of respondents' knowledge and skills across all areas. Enrollment in this area is said to be low, but since the late 1980s it has enjoyed the support of many NGOs working in basic education. The differences between types of community are the least marked in the entire sample. With a standard deviation of 2.06, the immigrant rural community presented the greatest degree of homogeneity out of all communities in the sample. Lastly, the homogenous rural community in this area produced an average that was among the highest for this type of community. This community (Tokombéré) was used as a case study.

- **Area 5** (East and South), with an overall score of 14.97 (or 60 percent), presents the highest average of all communities, but the standard deviation, at 3.60, shows slightly less homogeneity among respondents than the national average. This area has also benefited from NGO activities. The immigrant rural community in this area (Niete), whose average is more than 4 points above that of the homogenous rural community and more than one point higher than that of the urban community in this area, presents the highest average of all communities in the sample, and was used as a case study.

Among other educational-quality characteristics, notably infrastructures and their appropriateness, our study shows that: (i) students who own 1 to 2 books make up 43.7 percent of the total; (ii) 68.8 percent of schools are more than 10 years old; (iii) 87 percent of school facilities have fences and 86 percent have latrines; and (iv) 81.3 percent of respondents say that these basic-education institutions meet the needs of their community.

Access to basic education

Overall, 91.4 percent of respondents say that there are schools in their community. Children and young people make up 62.4 percent of students, and 79.6 percent of these children and young people are from families that are neither privileged nor underprivileged. On the other hand, a higher percentage of children from well-off environments attend school.

Access of girls to basic education

According to respondents, 46.8 percent of schools are mixed and 57.9 percent are for boys only. On the other hand, 79.2 percent of respondents say that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities with regard to education. According to 28.3 percent of respondents, there are also education sectors reserved for female members of the community. This does not reflect a desire to accord privileges to girls, since 57.9 percent of respondents say that if, for financial reasons, they had to make a choice about whether to educate boys or girls, they would give priority to boys. Those who said they would not give priority to either gender made up 21.3 percent of the total, while 3 percent said they would choose the most deserving children; and 11.6 percent would choose girls. Furthermore, 62.5 percent acknowledge the existence of factors that tend to discourage girls' access to education and 63.9 percent would advocate community actions to encourage equality of access for girls and boys. For 71.5 percent of respondents, actions designed to encourage this equality of opportunity do exist in the community. Those actions are: (i) abolition of or reduction in the number of early marriages; (ii) award of scholarships to girls from poor backgrounds; (iii) financial help for girls with good grades; and (iv) improvement of basic-education facilities.

b. The communities

State of community participation in basic education

Almost all communities surveyed have one or several organized structures that can help to coordinate actions related to basic education: 96.8 percent of respondents say that there are such structured organizations in their community. The organizations include various family, students' parents, religious, and professional associations. Only the APEs/PTAs are directly involved in basic education, and these exist in all the communities surveyed. Religious associations, which are found in 85.5 percent of communities, are the second-biggest initiators of basic-education projects (after the government).

The economic sustainability of the community

Of all communities visited, 72.2 percent have more than 5,000 inhabitants. Whereas 42.4 percent of the activities in these communities are related to trade or industry, 13.2 percent are related to agriculture.

Factors hindering and facilitating community participation

Many factors hinder or facilitate community participation in basic education. Our study drew a distinction between the individual and group factors involved in participation.

Individual factors involved in community participation in basic education

The following factors were considered: (i) age: 81.4 percent of those who participated are between 20 and 50 years old; (ii) gender: more men (66.4 percent) than women (32.9 percent) participated; and (iii) level of instruction: the highest proportion of participants spent some time in school. Furthermore, in homogenous rural environments, purchasing power is referred to as a constraint.

Group factors involved in community participation in basic education

Group factors involved in community participation in basic education include the following: (i) the presence of schools in the community; (ii) the economic sustainability of the community; (iii) the existence of community organizations; and (iv) faith in financial managers. In homogenous rural environments, two additional factors are involved: cooperation among all members and purchasing power (price of agricultural products). Lastly, in immigrant rural environments, the need for all members to be involved is another big factor.

Forms of community participation and the perception of roles

Community participation is either mandatory (APE), induced (purchase of supplies), or voluntary (follow-up of students' work). It essentially consists of financial contributions or commitments. According to 61.3 percent of respondents, the government, which is perceived as the main actor in basic education, still has the means to contribute. According to 66 percent of respondents, if the government is unable to pay, the community must organize itself, through its elite groups and development committees, to offer students appropriate basic-education facilities. Only 3.8 percent say that they can do nothing, while 3.4 percent say that children would simply have to drop out. In immigrant rural environments, people also talk in terms of transferring children elsewhere.

The first responsibility of communities is to enroll students in a school. Then comes payment of APE fees, which is a priority for 90.3 percent of respondents. Thereafter, in descending order, come: (i) purchasing of school supplies; (ii) helping in the classroom when needed; (iii) monitoring students' work (especially common in urban environments); and (iv) monitoring the work of teachers. In homogenous rural environments, financial commitments are linked to purchasing power, and management of educational and monitoring activities is perceived as the responsibility of the government. In immigrant rural environments, the emphasis is placed on financial contributions.

c. Case studies

The community cases studied were identified by statistical data obtained with tool D and by analysis of the level of girls' access to basic education, according to tool C. For each of three types of community, two extreme cases were studied, in two phases: (i) observation of the quality of basic education; and (ii) study of the community (local constraints or opportunities), based on the different elements of our analytical model (community characteristics, economic sustainability, perception of basic education, forms of community participation, and the perception of the roles of the community and the government in basic education). Using this approach, we were able to see whether the levels observed (good or bad; high or low) shared the same determinants.

Table 2: Type 1–Homogenous rural communities

Characteristics (homogenous rural)	**Highest score in the practical-knowledge test**	**Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test**
	Town of Tokombéré (Area 4)	**Town of Badzouidjon (Area 3)**
Quality of basic education		
Level of basic education	Low average: 13.34 out of 25 with a standard deviation of 2.73	Very low average: 10.47 with a standard deviation of 4.80
Access to basic education	- Enrollment in this region is low: 14.15 percent of children attend school - In theory, the area has 24 public schools, 6 working private schools and 3 to 5 parents' schools in the Mayo Sava Region	- Enrollment rates: 87.6 percent in the Ndé Region, but much lower in this community - Only one school with complete academic cycle
Girls' access to basic education	- Girls' enrollment rates: estimated at 9 percent, with rates close to zero in certain parts of the district	- Girls' enrollment rates: estimated at 85 percent in the region, in view of the low number of young people living in the village
Characteristics of basic education, according to school leaders	- Attendance rates: good - Quality of infrastructures and equipment: good - Profile and experience of teachers: basic and even minimal professional training for at least half of teachers in the public sector; on-site or on-the-job training in the private sector, especially religious schools - Contributions of parents: very active with very acute community awareness, especially among the young generation	- Attendance rates: good - Quality of infrastructures and equipment: temporary, makeshift materials - Profile and experience of teachers: local recruitment of teachers by parents, except principal, who is recruited by the State; minimal initial training and no professional training - Contributions: seen as more than just financial, despite extreme poverty of parents

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristics (homogenous rural)	**Highest score in the practical-knowledge test**	**Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test**
	Town of Tokombéré (Area 4)	**Town of Badzouidjon (Area 3)**
Communities		
Characteristics of the community	- Town situated close to the Sahel, marked by actions of Catholic missionaries 25 years ago - Population mostly peasants - Religious practices: animists, combined with some adherence to the Christian and Muslim faiths	- Exclusively agricultural community; no church or administrative body - Aging population with a very high rural exodus rate - Religious practices: animist, with a Christian element
Economic sustainability	- Economic activities focused on small-scale trading and small-scale animal breeding. Some organizations facilitate opening up to outside world, rational management of harvests and resulting revenues	- Economic activities focused on food production - Village holds regular market for essential products - Services obtained from nearby towns
Perceptions of basic education	- "An oasis beneath a sky scorched by the heat of 7 months of relentless sunshine" - Only chance for boys and girls to develop within their local environment - Very strong desire to serve a useful purpose, reflected in programs of certain facilities	- Awareness of importance of basic education
Forms of community	- Numerous group structures: APEs, religious and youth groups - Youth club initiates young people into community life - One organization pays school fees of the children of its various members - School fees may be paid in kind	- APE created recently in an effort to keep young people in the village - The village development committee is made up of an outside elite (those who grew up in the village now living elsewhere); enabled construction of a cultural center and a community health care facility, but the developer lives 350 km away

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristics (homogenous rural)	**Highest score in the practical-knowledge test** **Town of Tokombéré (Area 4)**	**Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test** **Town of Badzouidjon (Area 3)**
		- Participation in schools is largely financial; the APE houses and feeds teachers on a voluntary basis - The community created the school - The state recognized the school and appoints its principal
Perception of the community's roles compared with those of the government	- Education is perceived as a joint effort by public authorities (which cannot do everything) and members of the community - The government must give people the means to provide education for their children and do more to ensure it does not withdraw from this sector	- Community roles limited to financial mobilization provided by the development committee and to the logistical support of the principal/teacher sent by central administration - The community appreciates the (limited) contribution made by the government toward basic education
Local level of community participation	- "Comfortable" level based on the principle of sharing, which is a determinant factor of community participation	- Village is active despite poverty of the population

The factors that might explain why Tokombéré's results are better in terms of the level of education and of girls' access to education seem to reside in: (i) the social and economic stability of the town; (ii) a positive perception of basic education, which is reflected in practice by the adaptation of certain teaching programs; (iii) the energy and diversity of group organizations, as well as the town's involvement in the education of students; and (iv) external guidance (missionaries), which inspired in the people a sense of self-sacrifice for the common good. On the other hand, Badzouidjon's isolation, its depopulation, the relative newness of its organized institutions, and its relative lack of external support might explain its weak performance with regard to education.

Table 3: Type 2–Immigrant rural community

Characteristics (immigrant rural)	**Highest score in the practical-knowledge test**	**Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test**
	Town of Niete (Area 5)	**Town of Nkondjock (Area 2)**
Quality of basic education		
Level of basic education	- Very high average: 16.88 out of 25 with a standard deviation of 2.75	- Very low average: 11.04 with a standard deviation of 3.56
Access to basic education	- 98 percent of children attend school - 5 school, 1 youth center and 1 Rural Artisans' Group	- 45 percent of children attend school - 6 school and 1 Rural Artisans' Group
Girls' access to basic education	- Girls account for 51 percent of students	- Girls account for 15 percent of students
Characteristics of basic education, according to school leaders	- Attendance rates: good - Quality of infrastructures and equipment: good - Profile and experience of teachers: good - Contributions of parents: good (especially financial)	- Attendance rates: low - Quality of infrastructures and equipment: dilapidated - Profile and experience of teachers: insufficient and weak - Contributions of parents: weak and reluctant
Communities		
Characteristics of the community	- Boasts one of the largest agribusiness ventures in Cameroon, HEVECAM - Located close to an Atlantic coast town and resort - 15 ethnic groups represent 90 percent of the population - Religious practices not well defined; mainly Christians, and a few Muslims	- The result of a colonization exercise conducted by the State in the late 1960s - Located 70 km from a town to which it is linked by an unpaved road that is passable 8 months of the year - 148 natives out of 2,500 inhabitants - Conventional religious practices; mainly Christians
Economic viability	- Economic activities focused on rubber production - Trade dictated by salary payment periods - Constant and regular income assured by production volumes and the quality of the rubber	- Agricultural economic activities centered on family coffee and cocoa ventures - Very small-scale trade - Sporadic/seasonal revenues deriving from the sale of agricultural products

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristics (immigrant rural)	Highest score in the practical-knowledge test	Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test
	Town of Niete (Area 5)	Town of Nkondjock (Area 2)
Perceptions of basic education	- As positive for boys as for girls - Provides basis for social integration of young people - Enables community to renew its human resources	- Measured: necessary but without great conviction, either for boys or for girls Source of expense that cannot be quickly redeemed, given amount of schooling needed prior to job
Forms of community participation	- 8 types of group organization: family and ethnic groups, religious and political groupings, APEs, union organizations, development committees - Community participation focused on the mobilization of resources and monitoring the implementation of activities - Helping out with teaching is seen as futile, due to the fact that qualified teachers are available - The government and HEVECAM initiated the schools	- Only ethnic groups can act as catalysts - Family groups used for mutual assistance among members, nothing more - APEs do not function regularly - Community participation limited to the contribution of APEs, which are not fully appreciated by school leaders - The fovernment initiated the schools
Perception of the community's roles compared with those of the government	- Community roles limited to financial contributions and education of students - Help with teaching, monitoring, and evaluation not mentioned by the community - The government must create and run schools - The government must raise the purchasing power of the community so that it can take on basic education	- Community roles limited to enrollment of students and monitoring his or her schoolwork, if possible - The government is entirely responsible for basic education - Increasing community participation is secondary to improving the lives of rural communities

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristics (immigrant rural)	Highest score in the practical-knowledge test Town of Niete (Area 5)	Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test Town of Nkondjock (Area 2)
Local level of community participation	- High in terms of financial contributions and overall education of students - Endogenous factors favorable to participation: motivation, mutual understanding, trust, availability of financial resources	- Low - Constraints of participation: isolation, absence of a local elite that might serve as a model, very low purchasing power among population

The factors that might explain Niete's better performance with regard to the level of education and girls' access to education seem to reside in: (i) the regularity of household income; (ii) a positive perception of basic education; (iii) the variety of group organizations: (iv) community involvement that goes beyond mere financial contributions; (v) the presence of an industrial organization in the area, which acts as a focus for development; (vi) a positive cultural diversity; and (vii) the presence in the area of managers and other experts whose social status derives from their success at school.

In general, the constraints that operate among immigrant rural environments might be the following: (i) population diversity; (ii) cultural and religious diversity, which might be a source of inhibition and ostracism, thus deterring interest in community issues; (iii) the small population, which might reduce the number of participants in basic education; (iv) economic sustainability dependent on a single main activity; (v) isolation, which makes it hard for the area to open up to new ideas; and (vi) a loss of faith in financial managers.

On the other hand, favorable opportunities among immigrant rural environments might be: (i) the mixed population, which brings diversity and the opportunity to exchange experiences of community participation; and (ii) opportunities for salaried jobs, bringing regular income and thus payment of regular contributions to the school.

Table 4: Type 3–Urban communities

Characteristics (urban community)	Highest score in the practical-knowledge test Town of Bamenda (Area 1)	Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test Town of Mbalmayo (Area 2)
Quality of basic education		
Level of basic education	- Average far higher than in other urban environments: 16.2 with a standard deviation of 2.19	- Average lower than the national average: 13.72 with a standard of 3.58

Table 4: (continued)

Characteristics (urban community)	**Highest score in the practical-knowledge test**	**Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test**
	Town of Bamenda (Area 1)	**Town of Mbalmayo (Area 2)**
Access to basic education	- Enrollment rates: estimated to be 92.5 percent - Schools: nearly 60 schools dominated by the private religious sector	- Enrollment rates: estimated to be less than 90 percent - Public and private schools girls and boys: primary schools, Rural Artisans' Group/Housewives' Group, formal and non-formal education facility
Girls' access to basic education	- Girls' enrollment rates: around 90 percent	- Girls' enrollment rates: around 88 percent
Characteristics of basic education, according to school leaders	- Attendance rates: as good for girls as for boys - Quality of infrastructures and equipment: durable or semi-durable materials, generally equipped with insufficient number of desks and chairs - Profile and experience of teachers: minimal level of training equivalent to GCE O-Level, but also some teachers qualified to GCE A-Level standard; in the private and public sectors, almost all have received effective professional training - Contributions of parents: primarily financial, but it is generally diversified and includes co-management, the result of strong involvement and a long tradition of dialogue between the PTA and the schools	- Attendance rates: good - Quality of infrastructures and equipment: buildings made of durable materials of all kinds, but materials are old, mostly worn and dilapidated - Profile and experience of teachers: teachers trained in the ENI/ENIA in the public sector, but recruited on the spot in the private sector - Contributions of parents: rather reticent with a dominant tendency to turn to the government and missionaries for help
Communities		
Characteristics of the community	- Principal town of the North-West, English-speaking province, predominantly agricultural, living mostly from trade - Marked by colonial indirect rule, the community has a	- Crossroads and relay town for cash crops, thanks to Yaoundé-Douala railroad, very active until 1980s - Makeup of population: mostly people from town or nearby, but also many from

Table 4: (continued)

Characteristics (urban community)	Highest score in the practical-knowledge test	Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test
	Town of Bamenda (Area 1)	**Town of Mbalmayo (Area 2)**
	sense of autonomy and a desire to come to terms with itself - Population from different origins - Religious practices: strong traditional religions with growing influence of Christianity and, to a lesser degree, from the Muslim faith	the West and the North - Religious practices: mostly Christian, with strong elements of traditional religions
Economic viability	- Economic activities dominated by trade but primary sector very active; secondary sector, although poorly developed, is dynamic - Level of knowledge and pay in the tertiary sector very uneven	- Economic activities centered on trade and administration (services) - In decline: deterioration of the section of the railroad and improvement of the main highway are shifting the focus of interest away from the town - Dependence on prices of raw materials and cash crops - Few employees or administrators have enterprising spirit
Perceptions of basic education	- Very positive, for girls and boys in equal measure - Fast track for improving standard of living, no sacrifice too great for young people - Favors development and integration into society - Platform for development of individual and community	- Daily struggle for survival is considered more important than basic education
Forms of community participation	- The PTAs are active in society and very dynamic - Community participation varied, although most often financial: human investment, material contribution, decision-making, joint management - The private school sector is especially dynamic	- Organized groups limited - Community participation centered on financial contributions - The government, missionaries, and private interests initiated the schools

Table 4: (continued)

Characteristics (urban community)	Highest score in the practical-knowledge test	Lowest score in the practical-knowledge test
	Town of Bamenda (Area 1)	Town of Mbalmayo (Area 2)
Perception of the community's roles compared with those of the government	- Community roles embrace all aspects of basic education - The best institutions are private - The government provides support for community actions	- Community roles: communities aware of their role as partners but conditions are not always right for giving that role the required level of attention - Government action is dominant
Local level of community participation	- Very high level in all respects, allowing equal education for boys and girls - The aptitudes of each student constitute the sole criteria for dropping out of or remaining at school	- Level limited to mandatory fees, paid very reluctantly - Constraints of participation: purchasing power, priorities for survival more important

The factors that might explain Bamenda's better performance with regard to level of education and access of girls to education seem to reside in: (i) the long tradition of educational care inherited from the management system used by the British colonists; (ii) households' regular incomes; (iii) a positive perception of basic education; (iv) the vigor of group institutions; and (v) the fact that community involvement goes beyond mere funding. However, one major constraint to community participation is the economic sustainability of communities, especially when this participation, as in Cameroon, is essentially financial and inevitably suffers the consequences of a drop in households' purchasing power. This is also shown by our analysis of the town of Mbalmayo, although here, the poor results achieved might also stem from people's dependency on the government.

6. *Analysis of results*

Analysis of the case studies shows that the communities that produced the best results share the following characteristics: (i) a positive perception of basic education; (ii) regular and stable household incomes; (iii) experience with social mobilization of communities through organized and dynamic institutions; and (iv) a form of educational involvement that goes beyond mere financial contributions. In addition to these characteristics two other important factors exist: (i) the presence of external support factors or a focus for development within the community; and (ii) the presence, within the environment, of individual models whose social status derives from his or her education. On the other hand, the communities that produced the worst results in the case studies are marked primarily by: (i) their isolation; (ii) their measured perception of basic education; and (iii) their low level of involvement in education.

Girls' low level of access to education and the prejudices that restrict their access may be explained by the fact that men are most involved in basic education. It may be supposed that an increased presence of women in group organizations directly linked to the school might produce a significant improvement of the situation in this regard. The respondents also produced certain contradictory data, especially regarding the question of access for girls. Although most respondents said that opportunities for education were equal, they also acknowledged that most schools were reserved for boys only. This type of contradictory data limits the scope of our study results, in the sense that it is the respondents themselves who are evaluating their own knowledge or behavior. The goal of our study was not to find out what the respondents said they knew, but rather what they actually did with regard to basic education.

Each type of community faces constraints and specific opportunities. The fact that urban communities generally do better than other types of community—including those urban communities that do not share the characteristics of the "best" communities in the case studies—might suggest that community participation, at least according to the analytical model used, can explain only some of the variations in the level of basic education. Other favorable explanatory factors with regard to urban communities might, notably, be: (i) a greater presence of the government in these areas; (ii) limited decentralization of services; (iii) the way of life, and the nature of urban jobs, which require more basic knowledge, thus becoming an additional source of motivation for parents to educate their children; and (iv) the fact that there are few qualified teaching personnel with the motivation to teach in a rural environment, especially in isolated areas.

We should also bear in mind the fact that even the communities that produced better results did not exceed a level of expertise of 67.5 percent in terms of the knowledge and skills deemed essential for their development and that of their community. We should also note that overall the level of expertise in basic knowledge and skills—55 percent at a national level—is very low and certainly not enough to ensure the development of society. Thus, it appears that community participation alone, as presented under the analytical model, is not enough to improve the quality of education.

The level of basic education among the different communities in our study was measured by means of the practical-knowledge test. Because it emphasized aspects related to the knowledge and skills necessary in daily life (health, nutrition, and protection of the environment), to students' ability to integrate into their communities, and to ways in which students' development can be encouraged (civics, general knowledge), the test made it possible for us to address a neglected aspect of the basic-education concept, as defined at the Jomtien Conference. However, this theoretical and methodological choice did tend to obscure those aspects of the basic-education concept that are related to students' degree of literacy, or to their degree of basic knowledge in the areas of reading, writing, arithmetic, and problem-solving. In that sense, our study did not seek to define the level of basic education among the different communities. It sought instead to define the pragmatic, rather than cognitive, aspects of basic education. On the other hand, by harmonizing its methodology with those of three others member countries of ERNWACA, which were working on the same theme, but which gave more attention to the literacy-related aspects of basic education, the practical-knowledge test used by the Cameroon team ultimately offered a cognitive, rather than pragmatic analysis of the pragmatic aspects that it studied. Our study opened new avenues for research and its multi-level approach enhanced the analysis of the effects of participation on access and the quality of education at a regional level.

Our analysis of the results achieved in the practical-knowledge test raises a number of fundamental questions, which need to be addressed by further analyses and studies. These might, for example: (i) draw a distinction between those areas of the test in which students performed well, and those in which they scored badly, and provide a breakdown of data by gender, area, and type of community; or (ii) draw a distinction between the results achieved by students in the formal sector and those in the non-formal sector, between the results achieved by students in private and public schools, and even between those achieved by boys and the girls at these schools.

The earlier chapter on the issues involved in our study raised a significant aspect of the quality of education that our analytical model did not sufficiently take into account. Teachers in Cameroon are frustrated and resentful, underpaid, and without career prospects. And yet, teachers are community actors, and furthermore, the quality of the educational process—i.e., the teacher-student relationship—is the most important determinant of the quality of education. Community participation in improving the quality of education must involve providing support for the educational process, whether in the form of funding, teaching, or management. It inevitably involves negotiating and sharing powers among the different participants—from representatives of the government to the students themselves—to identify, mobilize, and manage the human, technical, material, and financial resources necessary to strengthen the educational relationships in the classrooms. Improving the quality of basic education by changing the interaction between different categories of actors, is a process of profound social change. For this reason, a supplementary study should be conducted with a view to developing a more interactive framework for community participation and shaping relations between the actors and resources that together define a given level of basic education in terms of the degree of literacy and the nature of the community's daily life.

7. *Conclusions and recommendations*

a. Conclusions

Participation in education is reflected in communities' traditional discourses and practices, in spite of Cameroon's highly centralized society. The phenomenon of community participation in basic education is both complex and simple. It is simple, in the sense that without a minimal level of community participation of a financial nature, the Cameroon education system would collapse. It is complex in the sense that the effects that participation produces on the quality of and access to basic education remain linked to many different parameters: types of participatory institutions, types of activities engaged in, categories of community actors, forms and level of participation, areas and types of community. Our study showed that for each type of community, those in which the scores in the practical-knowledge test were highest are also those in which interest in education is strongest, where group organizations are the most active, and where there is an external support mechanism or a focus for local development that help support the community. With the conclusion of our study, we should recall that the level of community participation varies with the quality of and access to basic education. Encouraging society to help promote education will inevitably lead to an improvement in the quality of education. And yet, at what point does community participation become unproductive? Our study cannot answer this question. However, developing a positive perception of education among communities is the best guarantee for improving the quality of education—an improvement that will be reflected notably in the integration of young people into their local environment and by their successful transition into working life.

In Cameroon, education continues to inspire good intentions, although the level of community participation differs from one region to another and from one community to another. The inequalities are real, and the State must introduce regulatory mechanisms that require people to act together. Cameroon must forge new community alliances in order to promote educational initiatives that do not restrict community action to mere financial and/or material contributions. This mobilization of the social institutions that can help provide basic education for all requires the highest level of political commitment and will. Decentralization of educational, economic, and political systems, and respecting each participant's right to propose its own solutions seem to offer the best chance for strengthening communities' involvement in basic education and thus for improving the quality of and access to this level of education.

Community participation in basic education remains tied to the form in which power is shared among members of the community, and between the communities themselves and the central authorities. Furthermore, communities seem to be driven by a desire to participate more effectively in basic education, apparently without knowing exactly what might be the real nature of the new role that awaits them. A veritable social dialogue is needed, in order to redefine the roles and responsibilities of the different social actors with regard to basic education, and in order that basic education can begin to be accepted and integrated within the local environment.

Lastly, we should also not forget that basic education includes early childhood education, out-of-school children, and elderly people who are becoming literate. We must therefore expand the contents of basic education to take these needs into account and to strengthen the communities' desire for full and effective participation in shaping their future.

b. Recommendations

Key recommendation of this study

Together with central and regional government authorities, develop and implement programs designed to increase the awareness of communities, and to mobilize them, to:

- spread awareness of the relevance of basic education and the issues surrounding it;
- explain why community participation is necessary;
- strengthen the ability of group institutions to participate in basic education in the areas of management, analysis, planning, and decision-making;
- encourage a redefinition of the respective roles of the government and communities.

Supporting community organizations

- Create community organizations to manage basic education that are entirely devoted to basic education, unlike the present APEs, which are also involved with secondary education. Suggestions include: Institutional Committee for Basic Education, Local Basic Education Committee, Regional Basic Education Committee, governed by the Regional Institution for Basic Education. These community organizations should be based largely on the model of the PTAs common in English-speaking regions, and their guiding philosophy should be to emphasize decentralization of basic-education management.

- Recognize the roles played in basic education by municipal authorities and by traditional leaders of homogenous rural communities.

- Help members of the community to become aware of their potential as full participants in basic education.

- Allow community organizations to define modes of community participation and to mobilize financial and material basic education resources.

- Depending on the type of community, adjust the type or nature of community participation to meet the real potential of members of the community.

Improving the quality of basic education

- Ensure that basic education responds to each respective cultural, ecological/geographical, and local and regional religious context.

- Enable members of the community, according to their respective areas of expertise, to help teach general and practical knowledge (culture, tradition, arts, health, hygiene, safety, defense, ecology).

- Formulate a specific status (career profile, benefits) for teachers and managers working in basic education.

- Create a levy to fund basic education, by redistributing existing levies (so as not to create a new tax), with a view to improving the infrastructures and equipment of basic-education facilities.

- In isolated rural environments (both homogenous and immigrant), give priority to local people in teacher training.

- In immigrant rural and urban environments, emphasize types and forms of community participation in terms of providing teaching assistance, and of contributing to the definition and evaluation of educational processes.

Improving access to basic education

- Implement the recommendations of the 1995 Convention on Education regarding free access to basic education.

- In rural environments (immigrant and homogenous):
    - raise the prestige of basic-education institutions by linking them to large-scale community enterprises (sanitation and others);

  - improve the density of schools by revising the school map;
  - envisage the possibility of adapting the school timetable to the activities of the local environment.

- In immigrant rural environments, combat child labor in agricultural and agribusiness enterprises by educating and training parents and employers in the rights of the child.

- In homogenous rural environments, identify and combat cultural models that are hostile to the enrollment of children in general, and of certain children (heirs apparent, elders).

Improving girls' access to basic education

- Give priority to women (as coordinators, programme leaders, agents for raising people's awareness) in the process of basic education.

- In immigrant or homogenous rural environments, address the mistaken perceptions (images) of the status and roles of women, through a process of awareness-raising conducted by local leaders and educated women.

c. Other avenues of research

Apart from the supplementary analyses and studies referred to in the section "Analysis of results," our study also identified other avenues of research that might significantly enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of community participation in the basic-education sector. These are as follows:

- the impact of management committees on access to basic education;
- community members' perception of the roles of the APE and the PTA, using an intersecting, comparative approach;
- listing all the modes/forms/types of community participation in basic education that can be implemented by community members;
- the economic, cultural, and religious determinants of child labor in rural immigrant communities of Cameroon.

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Chapter 6

Ghana

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1. *Introduction*

Available statistics showed that by 1987, about 70 percent of the adult population in Ghana were illiterate and 30 percent of the school-age children were not in school. The school dropout rate, especially at the basic level, was high. The combined effect of school-age children not being in school and the high dropout rate raised the level of illiteracy in the country even higher. Initiated in 1987, Ghana's educational reform is in consonance with recommendations made by the World Conference on Education for All. The new basic education curriculum stresses not only acquisition of academic knowledge, but also vocational, technical, and life skills development. Moreover, basic education is closely linked with the development of adult literacy programs.

2. *Statement of the problem*

The decline in the quality of education in Ghana started in the early 1970s, and by 1983 the education system had sunk to very low levels. The major problems that characterized this decline included the following: (i) presence in schools of a large number of untrained teachers; (ii) absence of the requisite curriculum materials in the majority of schools; (iii) deteriorated school buildings, furniture, and equipment; (iv) collapse of management and inspection of schools, especially at the basic level; (v) decline of enrollment growth to 1.5 percent for primary, 1.1 percent for middle and 1.5 percent for secondary levels whereas the school-age population grew at 3.6 percent per year; (vi) cut back on real levels of financing of the education sector, declining, in 1985, to only one-third of its 1976 level; and (vii) prevailing notion that the provision of education was the sole responsibility of government, depriving the system of any meaningful role the various communities could play.

As a result of these problems, a new major educational reform program was drawn up in 1987 to ensure that Ghana would be in a position to increase access to basic education, improve the quality of education, make it more relevant to socio-economic conditions, and sustain the reform program on national resources. This was to be achieved through an effective mobilization of all stakeholders in education, including the local communities of the schools, for a collective participation in the provision of basic education.

In view of the existing financial situation, where the proportion of government funds allocated to basic education has risen to over 62 percent since 1989 and is not expected to exceed the 1994 level of 65 percent by the year 2000, it is almost impossible for government alone to bear the responsibility of financing education if the present levels of access and quality are to be improved. In this light, it is considered necessary to establish the extent to which community participation, as conceived by government policy, is being achieved and how far the envisaged impact of community participation on access and quality is being realized. Furthermore, the assumption that community participation enhances the effectiveness of educational provision should be examined.

This study, conducted by a team of researchers from ERNWACA/Ghana, sought to establish the extent to which the level of community participation in Ghana affects access to and quality of education at the basic education level. It will attempt to establish critical utilization-focused information relating to: (i) types and forms of community participation in public schools; (ii) original and shifting dimensions of community participation; (iii) access to education; (iv) quality of education; and, (v) relationship between the dimensions and levels of community participation and access to as well as quality of basic education.

3. *Conceptual framework*

a. Basic education

Ahmed Manzoor (1983) defined basic education as a set of learning experiences which helps an individual to function in his/her social and physical environment, stressing that ideally, these early experiences should also lay the foundation for continuing lifelong learning. He identified three elements constituting basic education: (i) a systematic and collectively organized early childhood care and education program designed to promote normal physical, psychological, and intellectual growth of school-age children; (ii) primary-level education intended to be accessible to all children for a duration and in a form contingent on resources and level of educational development of a country; and (iii) literacy and non-formal education programs for youth and adults including post-primary non-formal education.

The central idea that runs through the definitions of "adult basic education" is that it provide basic reading, writing, and numeracy, as well as basic knowledge and skills in specific circumstances. The general expectations of adult functional literacy programs are that through them, adults would acquire and effectively use skills to develop themselves, their communities, and their countries. Communities and nations have definite roles to play in ensuring quality and access to adult education through functional literacy.

b. Access to basic education

Access suggests ensuring that inhibition in the utilization of physical, human, financial, and material resources made available in the provision of education, is minimized and possibly removed. It is an attempt to relate school enrollment to space available for enrollment. In a broader sense, access is seen in terms of the number of school-age children that have to be provided for and the actual space available. Access thus becomes linked to the growth rate of the population.

Countries are concerned in varying degrees to learn the extent to which educational systems meet perceived needs. Access is then measured to: (i) determine progress towards goals such as universal basic education; (ii) identify and measure disparities between different groups within a country; (iii) compare the national situation with that of other countries, thereby highlighting problems that need to be tackled; and (iv) express objectives for the expansion of schooling in precise quantitative terms. Techniques for measuring access, depending on the aspect one is interested in, include the calculation of the following rates: (i) admission rate; (ii) transition rate; (iii) enrollment rate; (iv) repetition rate; and (v) dropout rate.

Factors that are most significant in inhibiting access to education include the following:

- **Opportunity cost:** Even where basic education is nominally free, the learner and his/her family bear direct and indirect costs. The most significant indirect cost in developing countries is the loss of contribution of learners to the family's subsistence. The non-attainment of expected benefits from education also militates against access: parents may not be motivated to send their children to school and the children themselves may not want to remain in school if the educational content gives no prospect of better jobs and a better life than for those who fail to attend school.

- **Socio-cultural barriers:** (i) Problems need to be overcome in the use of a language other than the official language of instruction especially at the basic education level: lack of or very little agreement exists on standard scripts and written literature. Also qualified teachers in the relevant languages are lacking. (ii) Socio-cultural divisions in the area of physical access to education lead to disparities in educational provision. (iii) As a result of religious and traditional backgrounds, an individual or one gender's access to education could be restricted. For example, girls are usually expected to stay at home and cater to the family, while boys go to school.

- **Institutional and organizational issues:** The link between formal basic education, literacy programs, and post-basic, nonformal education as elements of basic education is recognized but has yet to emerge in most African countries. Such organic linkages have some significant effects on access. It is not possible to have major developments in access at the basic education level without corresponding changes at the other levels of education.

In adult basic education, several variables, often exogenous to learners, influence the probability that someone will become functionally literate.

- **Socio-psychological factors:** According to the norm theory (Kahneman and Miller, 1986, cited by Abadzi, 1994), people are accustomed to certain factors in their lives such as illiteracy, and this familiarity may diminish their desire to become literate. The fear of failure also contributes a great deal to non-enrollment and non-achievement among adult learners. Other factors concern people's perception of the benefits of education. To most illiterates, the benefits of education are not readily discernible and links with financial gains and information acquisition are not clear.

- **Facilitator related problems:** These factors have been identified as the single most important predictor of achievement in Nepalese programs (Comings et al., 1992). They include lack of preparation on the part of facilitators, lack of knowledge on topics, use of formal school methods of teaching, and absenteeism among facilitators.

- **Lack of physical infrastructure and logistics:** Most adult basic education programs, lacking their own infrastructure, rely on shared facilities with formal schools. Although shared use of facilities is a feature that appears attractive, difficulties are encountered in practice, for example conflicting claims on space, distance, and public image (Verspoor, 1991). Lack of appropriate furniture and poor lighting systems all affect the quality of adult basic education.

- **Financial constraints:** These constraints often put a limit on expansion and in some cases restrict the program to deal with certain age groups only. Abadzi (1994) noted that given the potential populations, even the best literacy programs would enroll a relatively small portion of illiterates due to financial constraints.

c. Relationship between quantity and quality

The use of public funds for any service, in any stable economy, with potential demand must have a limit, and given the necessary limit, quality will be a function of quantity in cost terms (Heron, 1979). The way to maximize quantity without lowering standards of quality must involve a blend of expensive necessities with low-cost elements. The choice between a mix of quantity and quality that is most relevant in a given country is often a political one, and is further restricted against the background of scarcity of human and financial resources (Hallak, 1990).

Although the quality of education is difficult to measure directly and easily, the following factors are believed to influence quality to a significant extent: (i) social factors (language in the home, parental interest in the child's learning achievements); (ii) school factors (walking distance to school, physical infrastructure and facilities, teacher qualifications, curricula, and time tables of schools, etc.); (iii) nature of the examination system and its effects on the achievements of learners; and (iv) management and supervision of basic education. However, among the most important influences on the quality of education is the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process. This depends to a large extent on the quality of the teacher, determined by training and natural gifts of teaching, and the willingness of the teacher to teach, determined most significantly by the level to which morale has been boosted. Morale is dependent on the incentives the teacher enjoys and the comfort he/she gets in the working environment. Learning effectiveness, on the other hand, depends not only on the learning ability of the pupil, but also on the seriousness he/she attaches to learning and regular attendance at classes.

d. Community participation in the provision of basic education

Baltzell (1968) and Nisbet (1969) describe a community as a place in which people live—a group with similar characteristics or social relations characterized by personal intimacy, emotional depth, social cohesion, and continuity in time. Others, like Sapin et al. (1990), define community in terms of quality of holding something in common, and of common identity. Community can also be seen as a process through which people take initiative and action collectively. It is based on the belief that problems in communities have solutions in the communities. Community therefore connotes intervention and a process of intervention in society (Steuart, 1985, cited in Baray Checowy, 1995).

Applied to education, the concept of community becomes the school community. It is an entity holding basic education infrastructures in common and is composed of the traditional/political leadership of the area, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the Town Development Committees (TDC), NGOs in the area, the various religious bodies, and the residents.

A regional study of 13 Asian countries suggests that to attain the goals of education for all by the year 2000, many more resources than are being provided are required. The study recommends strongly that while reducing wastage and raising efficiency may help to alleviate the burden, these moves should be supplemented by the readiness of national governments, international agencies, parents, and communities to shoulder the extra cost.

- **The sharing of responsibilities.** Local government bodies and communities are encouraged to take on and carry out responsibilities in providing basic education to the extent that governments are committed to support the process of devolution of authority and help strengthen local bodies. However, the appropriate model of decentralization should be that of partnership between central and local bodies on the basis of division of functions which can best be performed at each level, rather than that of taking away the power from the central to give to local bodies or of shifting the financial burden of education provision to communities. Participants at a parent-teacher cooperation seminar held in Hiroshima in 1990 concluded that school should no longer be considered solely as a place for teachers and children, but should be seen as an institution for teachers, parents, and the community to share experiences and to develop appropriate programs to enhance the learning capacity of the children.

- **Forms of community participation.** Ota (1986) identified three main forms of community financing of education found even in poor settings: (i) parental contributions in various forms such as school fees and PTA levies; (ii) contributions by the whole community, most commonly, in the form of labor toward construction work in the school; and (iii) contributions by voluntary organizations including religious bodies. Other innovative approaches increasing community participation (UNESCO, 1991) include orientation ceremonies, family visits, hobby courses for parents, pupils' performance pamphlets, parents' meetings, and classes.

- **Factors that facilitate community participation.** Parents can be mobilized, even if they are illiterate, disadvantaged, and live in rural areas. Factors that can ensure effective parental and community involvement were identified to include the following (UNESCO, 1991): (i) the provision of good leadership by head teachers who should be skilled in communicating with parents and communities; (ii) the provision of assistance to teachers by an advisory staff, on imparting techniques for effective communication with parents and communities; and (iii) providing teachers with practical techniques on the teacher guidance aspects of parental involvement. Effective parental involvement is least likely to happen unless teachers are taught its value and are trained in practical techniques they need to use.

- **Support to community participation.** Parents and the communities should be kept fully informed about the aims and methods of primary education. They need to be assisted to understand what their children will derive from their participation as well as the harm that may be done to the children by the lack of it. School authorities should be conscious that involvement is not a one-way activity solely determined by the school. Parents' involvement in the school provides opportunities for teachers and their heads to learn about the circumstances of the community, acquire knowledge of the economic, social, and educational backgrounds, as well as resource endowments of the parents and the community for use in devising strategies for their mobilization. Above all, community participation is a logical outcome of a policy of decentralization of educational provision. Effective participation, therefore, needs well-defined management structures for promoting parent-teacher and community-school cooperation.

- **Impact of community participation.** The literature asserts that a collaborative mechanism between parents and teachers can contribute significantly to fulfilling the goals and objectives of universal primary education. Moreover, parent-teacher cooperation in educational provision contributes to improvement in the enrollment and retention of pupils, maintenance of school facilities, learning environment, and overall quality and long-term impact of education. A common feature of the experience of Asian countries who decided to participate in the UNESCO's Joint Innovative Project on Raising the Achievement Level of Primary School Children is the fact that, in each case, a conscious effort was made by the education authorities to sensitize parents and their communities to their roles in the provision of education for their children. The effort was made in each instance through a well-designed program. It would appear, therefore, that the promotion of effective community participation cannot be ad hoc but must be a well-organized process with a strategy to involve the grassroots level.

- **Community participation and adult basic education.** More successful programs are those that teach literacy in an environment of support and reinforcement through explicit community participation and planning (Verspoor, 1992). Communities in which functional literacy classes are situated can help in mobilizing learners, planning and managing activities, monitoring program implementation, and monitoring and evaluating learning/teaching outcomes. Learners as a community can also contribute money, provide free labor, support voluntary instructors, create awareness about literacy among non-class members, and initiate and sustain development and income generation projects.

e. Community participation in Ghana

In Ghana, communities have traditionally participated in the provision of basic education but their participation used to be limited to the provision of school infrastructures. The 1987 Education Reform went beyond this traditional role of communities and was reinforced by the Local Government Law of 1988, which promoted local participation in decisions affecting communities through the establishment of decentralized departments. Communities are now expected to perceive development in terms of growth and improvement in the quality of life. Decentralization is seen as a vehicle to ensure easy service delivery and grassroots participation and is recognized as paramount in the conception/implementation/evaluation of development projects.

In the context of the educational reform, basic education is community-based. This policy grants ownership of basic schools to the communities in which the schools are located. It recognizes that the provision of basic education is a joint venture between government and the communities, and encourages communities to participate in school management. The roles of the two partners were defined in official policy documents as follows: (i) Government: provides curriculum materials, equipment, teachers, supervision and management; and (ii) Community: participates in school management, provides infrastructures, ensures pupils presence in school and patronage of PTA meetings, and supports a book supply scheme by paying a nominal fee. Through this policy, the government anticipated that the communities would construct their own school buildings to provide for the opening of junior secondary schools (JSS) so that pupils would not have to travel beyond a distance of three kilometers between home and school. Where school buildings already exist, communities would build workshops for the various practical-oriented subjects. It was also anticipated that the involvement of community opinion leaders in the affairs of the school would increase access to education for school-age children, and that community members would constitute a rich reservoir of supplementary education information needed for a holistic education.

The National Functional Literacy Program is also community-based and is directly managed by district offices, which form the locus and focus of the program. The program rotates on the hub of voluntarism by relying on the services of voluntary facilitators. The literacy classes' community comprises the various interest groups within the larger community such as religious bodies, voluntary organizations, extension agents, chiefs and elders, district assemblies, NGOs resident in the communities, facilitators, supervisors, the Village Literacy Advisory Committees, and members of the community. Communities are expected to play very important roles in ensuring the effectiveness of the program by getting involved in class formation and management. The support from the larger community is expected to raise the quality of instruction, ensure an increase in access, provide equity and ensure sustainability. But, as noted by Abbey (1994), "unfortunately many communities perceive the program as a national program and expect classes to be formed and equipped from the national headquarters."

Four steps have been taken by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to promote the policy of community-based schools: (i) promulgation of PNDC Law 207 creating 22 decentralized departments, including education; (ii) workshops/seminars organized to conscientise district chief executives, community/opinion leaders and PTA executives; (iii) identification of community strategies and structures within the community that could facilitate/promote participation; and (iv) adequate media publicity of communities' achievements to encourage other communities.

The literature review identified four main modes of participation in Ghana: (i) participation in the decision-making process, through School Management Committees (SMC) and PTAs; (ii) participation in the school endowment where community limits its role to donating educational infrastructures and leaves their use to the discretion of school authorities; (iii) participation in the teaching and learning process where community members act as resource persons to assist in those areas where the staff alone cannot cope; and (iv) participation focused on access to education where chiefs and development committees undertake to promote access through registration of births, determination of the school-age population, use of moral persuasion, or compulsion to get children enrolled and imposing fines on defaulters.

In the Ghanaian context, forms of inequalities in access to basic education include: (i) inequalities between the rich and poor; (ii) between sexes; (iii) in per capita education expenditure between the levels of education; and (iv) in the distribution of educational resources. Factors recognized as potential threats to effective community participation in schools include: social heterogeneity and conflict; passivity, poverty, prevalence of illiteracy, resistance of institutions to accept change; organizational and administrative obstacles; political and cultural factors; failure of educational authorities to raise the consciousness of community members effectively; suspicion between government and NGOs; lack of collaborative skills and a general difficulty in sustaining the participatory process.

4. *Research methodology*

a. Aim, assumption, and hypothesis

The literature review has shown a positive relationship between community participation in basic education and access and quality. This study, therefore, is directed to find out the extent to which this relationship exists in the Ghanaian situation. To achieve this, the study tested the following assumption and hypotheses: the forms and levels of community participation in the provision of basic education vary from community to community and these variations are reflected in the extent of access to and the quality of education. Thus, community participation should enhance the effectiveness and fullness of education provision. Hypothesis 1: Where the level of community participation is high, student performance is high. Hypothesis 2: Where the level of community participation is high, school endowment is high.

b. Specific research questions

Community participation

- To what extent are communities aware of the need for their participation in the provision of school infrastructure?
- To what extent are communities aware of areas of participation other than the provision of school infrastructure?
- To what extent do communities initiate their own educational projects and what are the basic motives behind the projects initiated by the communities?
- What are the forms of community participation in Ghana?
- What is the attitude of communities to the provision of basic education?
- How do the communities perceive their responsibility for the provision of basic education?

- What factors affect community participation positively or adversely?
- How can community participation be further encouraged in Ghanaian schools?

Access to education

- What factors affect access to basic education in various communities and do they vary from community to community?
- In which type of communities is access to basic education a problem?
- Do communities perceive problems related to access as their problem or that of government?
- How do communities attempt to solve problems of access to basic education?
- How does the level of community participation in the provision of school infrastructure affect access to basic education?
- Are there any differences in the factors that affect children's initial access to and their retention in school?

Quality of education

- Has the quality of education been rising or falling since the introduction of the reform program?
- What is the perception of communities about the quality of education?
- In what ways does the community participation affect the quality of education?
- Has the level of community participation in schools any relationship with quality of education?

c. Definition of variables

In Ghana, before the 1987 Education Reform, basic education covered the first six years of primary education and four years of middle school. They jointly constituted elementary school at the time. With the implementation of the Education Reform, basic education in the formal sector now covers the primary and junior secondary school levels. This constitutes nine years of compulsory formal education (6 years of primary and 3 years of JSS).

Community participation is the involvement by the community in education programs within the framework of the national development program. It should be distinguished from a self-help project where the community itself does a needs assessment and mobilizes resources to satisfy those needs identified. Community participation is based on the reasoning that the provision of basic education should be a joint venture between government and the community.

Communities are characterized by three levels of participation, each level being defined mainly through the following multi-dimensional variables:

- High Level: (i) community is ever ready and anxious to get to know the needs and problems of the school; (ii) devotes a lot of its communal development efforts to school needs; (iii) constantly levies its members to raise funds to address school needs; (iv) has an effective leadership that champions the cause of the school; and (v) parents patronize PTA meetings well.

- Average Level: (i) community tries sometimes to address the needs and problems of the school; (ii) could have done better if there were good leadership; (iii) participates because it seems to have no choice; (iv) some parents participate effectively but most are unconcerned; and (v) parents patronize PTA meetings only during their free or non-farming season times.

- Low Level: (i) community hardly knows whether the school has any needs or problems; (ii) believes that the government has the sole responsibility for the school; (iii) is poor and does not believe in its capacity to do anything for the school; (iv) has a very lukewarm attitude towards the school; and (v) most parents cannot sacrifice even one day in months to attend PTA meetings.

In the analysis, the study used the assessment of the level of participation of the communities made by the teachers.

The study focused on five forms of community participation that exist in the schools: (i) school management; (ii) provision of infrastructural facilities and needs; (iii) teaching and learning process; (iv) pupils' retention; and (v) attendance at and patronage of PTA meetings.

Access is measured in terms of rates of enrollment and school endowment, defined as the totality of facilities, including permanent school building, staff room, head teacher's office, storeroom, library, toilet, urinal, changing room, playing field, motorable road, standard furniture for all pupils and teachers, textbooks, syllabi and teacher's manual for all subjects, and a first aid box.

The quality of education is measured in terms of student achievements and assessed in this study through English language and mathematics at both primary and JSS levels and functional literacy skills at the nonformal level. Class 5 pupils were used in the primary schools and Form 2 pupils at the JSS level. A score of 50 percent was set as an acceptable minimum standard of achievement for all subjects.

d. Sampling procedures

The target population was leadership and membership of all primary and JSS schools and adult literacy centers spread throughout all ten administrative regions of Ghana. Included in the target population were all pupils in Class 5 (primary), Form 2 (JSS) and their parents, adult learners throughout the country, school administrators, teachers at the basic level, facilitators and supervisors of literacy classes. Seventy two schools were selected in the sample and 2,130 subjects participated in the study, including 484 pupils at the primary level, 505 at the JSS level, and 480 adult learners, and 661 respondents from the school communities (parents, PTA members, community leaders, teachers, facilitators).

The sampling procedure employed was two-fold:

- The country was zoned into four clusters, based on shared characteristics with regards to general attitudes of community members to participation in the provision of basic education:
  - Zone 1: Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions;
  - Zone 2: Brong-Ahafo and Ashanti Regions;
  - Zone 3: Eastern, Volta, and Greater Accra Regions;
  - Zone 4: Central and Western regions.
- A sample of six school communities from each of the four zones was selected through cluster and multi-stage sampling procedures to conform to six conditions: (i) sample from each zone drawn from two administrative districts and two regions; (ii) sample evenly drawn from rural, peri-rural and urban communities; (iii) sample provided a gender balance at least with regard to pupils and adult learners; (iv) in each zone, two primary schools, JSS and literacy centers from each type of community; (v) communities should have all three components of basic education; (vi) in each school community, sample should include all pupils in Class 5 and JSS Form 2; all teachers of the school, including head, PTA and opinion leaders, members of the SMC and randomly selected ordinary members of the community. Additionally, 20 adult learners, 5 facilitators, and the supervisors of the literacy centers were brought into the sample.

e. *Data collection and analysis*

Data collection used the following techniques: survey, focus group discussion, observation, and information gathering through evaluation reports of "Equal Opportunities Strategy" projects conducted in Ghana. The research team adopted the Equity Improvement Program (EIP) for the purpose of studying the impact of community participation on access, retention, and quality of education. The main component of the Primary Education Program which was the USAID major educational assistance to Ghana, the Equity Improvement Program (EIP) involved targeting certain educationally handicapped districts and providing them with necessary resources to test pilot projects, aimed at alleviating identified constraints to education delivery in the targeted communities. Eight pilot projects were established under the program. Central to each of these projects was the creation of awareness in parents and community members that community involvement goes beyond agreeing to send their children to school or merely attending to the material and financial needs of the school. In all, 44 schools were selected from identified problem districts for the pilot.

Four pilot projects were found to be very relevant to the current study: the Community Involvement Project, the Increased Retention Project, the Scholarship Project, and the Furniture Project. All set targets/outcomes of these projects were expected to be achieved through improved community involvement in the activities of the schools, especially in the project activities. The pilot projects were allowed a five-year implementational period before being externally evaluated. The team relied on raw data collected during the evaluation of the program and carried out its own analysis of access and retention rates.

Eleven separate instruments were specially developed and trial-tested to solicit information from the different respondent categories. These instruments can be consulted at the ERNWACA/Ghana office in Accra. Field assistants received a 16-day training program designed by the principal researchers and their assistants. The official opening of the training workshop was used to launch the research project formally. The launching was done by the Deputy Minister of Education who expressed the hope that the project would prove to be very decisive in influencing policy and decisions in the country's educational reform program.

Procedures of the analysis using SSPS software included: (i) correlation indices of the level of participation and school performance scores, using means and standard deviation (see Section 5.f, Tables 2 and 3) as well as access rates (quantified); (ii) comparative analysis of the level of participation of the three community types; and (iii) comparison of level of community participation and school endowment. For some items requiring rating, correlational analyses were conducted to determine the degree of relationship and significance tested at the .05 level.

For the calculation of the access rate in Section 5.g (see Table 4), class enrollment figures for succeeding years from 1990/91 to 1993/94 were used with the formula: *[(b-a)/a]* where "a" represents the base year enrollment and "b" the enrollment for the following year. Pupils in classes 5 and 6 were used in calculating the retention rate. Where possible, the elements of transfer and repetition were removed from the class enrollment figures before the retention rates were computed. In the calculation of achievement scores for the various tests, the mean scores per subject, per class, and per school were computed. These scores were then transformed into standard scores (t-scores) for each school, thus providing a common base for further analysis or computation to get a single score to represent the overall mean achievement of each community.

f. Special issues

The draft report was reviewed by nine members of the ERNWACA National Scientific Board and two decision/policy makers from the MOE during a two-day discussion with the project team to ensure quality.

The study covered 24 communities spread throughout Ghana. These communities were fairly representative of the various communities in the country. The validity of the study has been enhanced through the use of the triangulation approach, using several data collection instruments, and through the adoption and use of the evaluation findings of a pilot intervention with a focus on promoting community participation. The findings of this study may therefore be said to be representative of the situation in the country at the time the study was conducted.

5. Findings

a. Respondents' characteristics

Parents/guardians/community members/leaders: 235 respondents (60% male, 40% female, and 73% married). Eighty percent were above 35 years and the majority had an education varying from no formal education to JSS. The main occupation was farming. Eighty seven percent of their household had a size of less than 13 but none of the urban households was larger than 8.

Head teachers and teachers: 122 respondents (31% head teachers and 69% teachers). Seventy nine percent of them were above 35 years. Thirty eight percent of teachers were untrained (6% in urban, 12% in peri-urban, and 20% in rural schools). Fifty five percent had worked in their respective school for at least four years. Twenty three percent of them reside outside their respective school communities.

Facilitators of adult literacy classes: 72 respondents (69% male, 31% female, 82% married). Seventy four percent attended JSS or held a Teacher Certificate A. For almost 80 percent of them, farming or civil service were the main occupations. Sixty percent volunteered to take the job. Seventy three percent had served the program for three years or less.

Community and PTA leaders: 166 PTA leaders and 181 community leaders participated in the 48 separate focus groups discussions (FGD). Most of them were male, over 40 years, married and had primary or no formal education. Twenty three percent had all their children in school.

Community members and parents: 192 respondents (97 parents/guardians and 95 community members). One hundred twelve were male and 80 female, and most of them were married. Seventy percent of them attended JSS, primary or nonformal classes. Seventeen percent held a Teachers Certificate A or a diploma. Farming and trading were the most usual occupations.

b. Results from head teachers and teachers

Basic data

- According to these respondents, schools were initiated and/or built by the Town Development Committee (47%), religious body (36%), government (31%), or local authority (27%). Private individuals or NGOs, together, were involved in 13 percent of the school initiatives. [Note: multiple choice question]

- The areas in which the communities participated were: decision-making process to build the school (96%), financing the school project (87%), contributing labor (93%) or material (75%) toward building the schools. [Multiple choice question]

- Sixty seven percent of classes had classrooms. Inadequate classrooms were managed through various arrangements, including: shift system, JSS sharing classrooms with the primary sector, combining classes into one classroom, use of temporary sheds or classes held under trees. Additional classrooms were provided by TDC/community (38%), local authority (18%), religious body (17%), government (16%) or private individual and NGO (12% together). [Multiple choice question]

- From the 24 school communities, 5 were 100 percent affirmative that more children could have been accorded access to basic education with the available accommodation, 9 were 100 percent negative, and the rest varied between 20-80 percent in the affirmative.

- The three types of community schools presented the following endowment strength: (i) urban community schools: 64 percent, varying from 47 percent to 82 percent; (ii) peri-urban: 60 percent, varying from 47 percent to 71 percent; and (iii) rural: 51.5 percent, varying from 41 percent to 58 percent.

- Finally, there were only six schools in the sample without untrained teachers on the staff. With the exception of one peri-urban school, all these schools were urban.

Types and forms of community participation

- Teachers identified four types of assistance their school has enjoyed from the community: (i) material help (51%); (ii) communal labor (39%); (iii) financial assistance (34%); and (iv) pedagogical help (23%). Among unfulfilled expectations, priorities identified were: furniture, library, staff accommodations, JSS workshop, and permanent school building. These priorities were discussed with the community, essentially through the PTA. Although some communities took action, the majority of them had a lukewarm attitude or only made promises. [Multiple choice question]

- Other forms of assistance given to the school by the community were: visits schools to assess progress (11.5%), cooperate with staff (8%), and encourage pupils' attendance (7%). Forms of assistance provided by parents to promote school work were to: provide basic needs of pupils (46%), motivate teachers to teach effectively (10%), and regularly attend PTA meetings and make constructive contributions (8%).

- Forty seven point five percent indicated that the GES or MOE made conscious efforts to make the community aware of its participatory responsibility. A critical observation of the responses revealed that the communities in which no conscious effort was made by GES or MOE showed the lowest levels of participation.

- Eleven percent of teachers rated community participation in their schools as high/very high, 39 percent average, and 49 percent low/very low. Twenty percent rated the capacity and ability of their community to participate effectively as high/very high, 36 percent as average and 44 percent as low/very low. Community participation was nevertheless effective for 38 percent of the teachers: (i) the donation of materials for making desks for pupils thus providing an environment which was conducive to learning; (ii) those donations also allowed practical training in technical skills; (iii) practical agriculture has been enhanced by the donation of land; and (iv) the construction of toilets created a healthy environment for learning.

- The level of cooperation between the community and the staff was rated high/very high by 31 percent of teachers, average by 52 percent, and low/very low by 15 percent. Finally, the degree of confidence respondents had in the community on the issue of the community's concern for teachers' welfare was rated high/very high: 14 percent, average: 46 percent, low/very low: 34 percent.

- The existence of SMCs is an essential ingredient of the new system of basic education. About 43 percent of the schools claimed to have management committees. And of these, only about 10 percent were reported to be highly committed to running the schools. As many as 50 percent of the head teachers and teachers who have SMCs think that the community's level of commitment and contribution to the running of the school is low. Explanations provided for this low percentage are: the lack of education for community members on the need for a SMC, the recent introduction of this idea to the community, and the lack of proper community organization.

- All the schools studied reported that they have PTAs, but only 18 percent of head teachers and teachers rated the attendance of parents at PTA meetings as high/very high. Ironically, 43 percent of the head teachers and teachers attach a high importance to the contribution of parents at PTA meetings with only 12 percent indicating a low importance attachment. In fact, it appears that parents do not attend PTA meetings because the meetings clash with their other activities, especially farming in the rural areas. Fifty one percent of respondents indicated that the community cooperates fully with the school in the enrollment drive. Finally, the community willingness to involve itself in the affairs of the school was rated high/very high: 11 percent, average: 40 percent, low/very low: 37 percent.

- According to the teachers, three attitudinal statements best describe their respective community: (i) community participation is a necessary contribution to the education and preparation of children for life: 36 percent; (ii) community participation is a means of relieving government of some of its burdens to enable it to pay attention to other social needs: 33 percent; and (iii) after sacrificing the contributions our children could make towards the family upkeep, we are asked again with a call to waste time and resources to assist a school that has no value to us: 10 percent.

- Teachers who indicated that community participation has increased access said that: (i) the active involvement of the chief and elders in the enrollment drive had compelled some unwilling parents to send their children to school; (ii) the involvement of parents who already had their children in the school in the enrollment drive convinced the otherwise unwilling parents that there was some good to schooling; and (iii) the provision of such basic needs as furniture make the school attractive to pupils and helped in retention. On the contrary, the lack of or ineffective community participation will, among other effects: (i) make some pupils lose interest in schooling; (ii) adversely affect their punctuality or the regularity of their attendance; and (iii) cause shortage of school materials, poor regard for and response to school rules, and falling of educational standards.

- For 40 percent of teachers, their communities were more responsive when problems and needs of the school were presented to the community by a member of staff who comes from the community. To get the needs and problems known to the community, teachers used the PTA meetings 77 percent of the time. From the teachers' point of view, the most severe obstacles to effective community participation are: poverty (36%), high illiteracy rate (29%), and lack of community's interest in school (14%). The chances of sustaining the existing levels of community participation or improving them were rated as high/very high by 33 percent of the respondents, while the majority assessed it to be average and 5 percent as low/very low.

- Suggestions formulated by teachers to promote effective community participation include: (i) organizing regular PTA meetings; (ii) forming Community Development Committees; (iii) forming an SMC; (iv) public education through the Assembly man; (v) imposing and enforcing of compulsory contributions by the community leadership; (vi) encouraging parents to visit the school regularly and making them feel as welcome as possible; and (vii) making facilities in the school available to the community public, e.g., the playing field.

c. Results from the focus groups discussions

Understanding the basic education concept

For the community and PTA leaders, basic education, in the Ghanian context, is made up of all institutions from nursery to JSS. Since adult literacy classes do not form a part of the formal system, they were not sure whether it should be considered as part of basic education. In comparison with the old education system, these leaders identified, among others, the following differences: (i) the duration of the present system is shorter; (ii) the scope of the curriculum in the present system is broader; (iii) students/pupils under the former system spoke better English; (iv) the pupil/teacher ratio in the former system was greater; (v) better discipline existed under the old system; and (vi) the present system is more diversified with a lot of emphasis on practical skill subjects. The beneficiaries of basic education included the following categories of stakeholders: (i) children above 5 years; (ii) parents; (iii) the community; (iv) the nation as a whole; and (vi) employers.

In most communities, the establishment of schools relied on individual and community initiatives in response to: (i) availability of school-age children; (ii) long distances children had to cover before getting to the nearest school; (iii) determination of the people to eradicate illiteracy from the community; and (iv) need to train local teachers to assist in missionary work in the community. When the school was initiated by government, the community had to comply with three requirements before school was established: (i) availability of school-age children; (ii) provision of a classroom; and (iii) provision of accommodation for teachers. Initial problems to which the discussants were confronted after the school was established included: (i) the responsibility of paying fees; (ii) people who did not want their children to attend a new school; (iii) inability of some parents to meet the school needs of the chiidren; (iv) lack of furniture for the pupils; (v) the never-ending demands from the schools; and (vi) the loss of domestic services from their children.

Forms of community participation

The involvement of the community in the development activities of the school took the following forms: (i) providing land, money, materials, communal labor, and free accommodation for teachers; (ii) building school facilities; (iii) acting as resource persons teaching traditional cultural practices; and (iv) organizing fora to discuss the problems of the school.

Even before independence, some communities used to play significant roles in educating their children. However, at that time, communities undertook school projects they could afford. Now the MOE makes a demand without first assessing the capacity of the communities to cope with the responsibilities asked of them.

Schools also get involved in community activities such as: assisting community members in providing cheap labor during building projects, clearing/weeding key public places, placing classrooms at the disposal of church organizations, playing leading roles in organizing various groups within the church, and entertaining the community during festivities and durbars.

Levels of community participation

While it is generally easy to mobilize members of the community in areas such as communal labor, it is quite difficult in other areas such as paying levies for school projects and attending PTA meetings. Community and PTA leaders get involved in the school activities because children in school are their own children and they ought to lend a hand in establishing a strong future for them. According to discussants, chiefs and elders generally readily assist schools when called upon and they themselves participate in communal labor in most communities. Opinion leaders are also very supportive of participation in the provision of education.

A majority of the community and PTA leaders admitted that a good communication link existed between them and the school which makes possible their getting acquainted with the problems of the school. This communication link included information transmitted by head teachers and teachers to the church, by the head teacher to the chief, and information transmitted during occasional visits to the school or during PTA meetings.

Discussants justified their participation in school activities by the following: (i) schools will collapse or not even take off at all without community support, and if the schools fail in achieving their objectives, the children suffer; (ii) parents have a primary responsibility to provide for the needs of their children to enable them grow into responsible adults; and (iii) where the community fails to cooperate with the school, the children can easily become wayward. They added that it is primarily the responsibility of parents and even the community to ensure that all children who should be in school are. For them, no amount of legislation can put children in school if the parents are not convinced of the need to send their children to school.

Discussants were aware of the existence of adult literacy classes and their purpose. Few of them were learners at these literacy classes. In all classes of the sampled communities, female outnumbered male learners. Most of the facilitators are doing a good job though critics of the program considered it a sheer waste of time and resources. Those critics argued that resources spent on the program could have been used to increase access and quality in the formal sector. However, community and PTA leaders generally believed that the program was worthwhile and that the facilitators need more support and motivation from the community.

The main problems inhibiting community participation are: (i) the scheduling of PTA meetings is not very appropriate; (ii) responsibilities assigned to the communities by government are beyond the capability of the communities; (iii) the education authorities sometimes do not explain why the community is called upon to do certain things; and (iv) it is very difficult to mobilize the youth for communal work; they generally have a general lukewarm attitude towards it.

d. Results from community members and parents

Nature and areas of participation

Seventy seven percent of community members and parents indicated that their income levels had not inhibited their contribution to the provision of basic education. Table 1 presents, in the respondents' opinion, the roles played by the various stakeholders in establishing a school in their communities.

In 22 communities, classrooms were considered to be the prevailing need of the schools. Other needs most often identified were teaching/learning materials and furniture. On the basis of the needs identified, community members and parents indicated communal labor and financial aid as two main areas in which they could assist the school.

Over 69 percent of the community members and parents felt that they should be involved in the process of curriculum development for the schools. Such involvement would: (i) enhance understanding between teachers and community members; (ii) put the experience of the community at the disposal of teachers for pupils' benefit; (iii) promote quality of education; (iv) encourage the community to address the needs of the school; and (v) ensure welfare of teachers and pupils. Again 84 percent of these respondents indicated that the community should be involved in managing and administrating the schools. This notion is encouraging and the authorities should do everything possible to involve the people at the level of school management and administration. In contrast, respondents who felt that the community should have no say in school management indicated that: (i) involvement in management will amount to interference; and (ii) it will result in confusion and misunderstanding between teachers and the community.

Table 1: Roles of stakeholders in establishment of school

Stakeholder	Decision	Finances	Labor	Material
Government	54.2%	54.2%	-	54.2%
Local authority	26.4%	16.7%	-	75.0%
TDC/Community	16.7%	20.8%	83.3%	45.8%
Religious body	29.2%	29.2%	29.2%	33.3%
NGO	-	12.5%	-	12.5%
Private individual	-	29.2%	50.0%	20.8%
Respondent	-	20.8%*	83.5%*	17.8%*

* Percentage of total number of respondents rather than percentage of number of communities

Other forms or areas of community involvement in school activities identified by community members and parents include: supervision of schools, regular visits to the school, contributions to PTA discussions, and paying PTA and school dues.

Access

All communities except one indicated that some school-age children were not in school. Respondents from the community with the 100 percent enrollment rate explain their success by the: (i) involvement of everyone in the community in the enrollment drive; (ii) determination of all parents to have their children educated; and (iii) community awareness of the benefits of education. Respondents from the other communities indicated that factors militating against the enrollment of every school-age child were: (i) high cost of living; (ii) inability of parents to provide for the needs of their children; (iii) ignorance of the benefits of education; (iv) high opportunity costs of children's education; and (v) poor perception of and attitudes toward female education. The greatest hindrance to parents sending their children to school cited by respondents was poverty (81%).

Awareness of official directive on participation

Forty six percent of the community members and parents were not aware of any government or MOE/GES directives on community participation. In eight communities, respondents who claimed ignorance exceeded those who were aware of these directives. For the other respondents, the kind of directives they were aware of included: (i) communities should provide workshops for their JSS (45%); (ii) schools are now community-based (26%); and (iii) communities should provide furniture for basic education schools (20%).

Fifty six percent of respondents indicated that at times the heads of school directly suggest to them at times what community members and parents could do for the schools: (i) provide toilet facilities; (ii) construct a workshop; (iii) visit the school regularly; and (iv) monitor the attendance or supervise the homework of their wards. Those without direct communication with their respective school head learned about the schools' through: (i) their wards; (ii) general observation during visits to the school; and (iii) the chief of the community. Twenty five percent of the community members and parents never visit the school while 28 percent of them visit it once a term and 24 percent once a month. SMC representatives generally report to the community once every week (42%) or once a term (48.5%).

Experiences in community participation

Positive experiences of involvement identified by community members and parents were: (i) massive turn out by members of the community for planned communal labor; (ii) the healthy and joyous spirit in which communal labor is generally carried out; and (iii) success achieved at fund raising to meet a targeted amount for a school project. Bitter experiences were described as: (i) low turn out for communal labor to address the needs/problems of the school; (ii) massive failure of parents to pay the agreed PTA levies to address an urgent need of the school; and (iii) lack of discipline of some members of the community during school-based communal labor.

For 58 percent of the respondents, their communities did not have the means to fulfill the education provision responsibilities assigned to them. The main reasons given to explain this situation were related to the poverty of the community members. Thus, respondents expressed the opinion that most (47%) members of the community or some of them (34%) are well disposed to assist in developing the school but do not have the means.

Mobilization of parents and members of the community was perceived as easy in 13 communities and difficult in 11. Where mobilization is easy: (i) people easily get involved in the schools' activities without persuasion; (ii) everybody in the community shows some interest in the affairs of the school, knows the importance of education and that it is a legacy they can leave their children; and (iii) the chief provides effective leadership and inspires everybody to participate. Where the mobilization is difficult: (i) time schedule for participation is often unsuitable for most people; (ii) attendance at communal labor is generally poor and no sanctions are imposed on defaulters; (iii) most people think of public assets and responsibilities as nobody's assets or responsibilities; and (iv) accountability of levies is poor and, therefore, people do not want to pay any levies.

Factors promoting community participation

- The response of the communities to calls to assist the school is not in any way related to whether or not the person making the appeal is a native. For 94.5 percent of the community members and parents, community participation will be more pronounced where teachers are more willing to accept and respect the views of members of the community. Eighty six percent of the respondents felt that teachers respect their views.

- Fifty seven percent of the respondents indicated that their communities have benefited from school involvement or assistance in their development efforts. This school involvement took various forms: (i) school children assisting health officers to offer health services; (ii) tree planting; (iii) erection of sheds for durbars; (iv) teachers serving as facilitators at adult literacy classes; and (v) cleaning various sites.

- The main reasons that got community members and parents personally involved in school activities were: (i) promoting the development and welfare of the school (30%); (ii) supporting the church that had created the school and has the responsibility to sustain it (23%); and (iii) seeking the future prosperity of their child (19.5%). Disincentives to community participation include: (i) persistent unemployment of school-leavers (91%); (ii) lack of accountability for monies collected for school projects (65%); and (iii) lack of sanctions for those who refuse to participate in communal labor (10%).

- The main problems inhibiting a high level of community participation included: (i) poor leadership in the community; (ii) poverty among the majority of community members; (iii) ignorance as a result of illiteracy; (iv) presence of several unemployed school-leavers; and (v) undemocratic imposition of responsibilities by MOE.

Participation in the provision of adult literacy classes

- Eighty percent of community members and parents were aware of the existence of adult literacy classes in their communities and they were unanimous in their claim that there were community participatory conditions attached to the opening of adult literacy classes. The conditions included: (i) identifying facilitators to be trained to run the program; (ii) working out their own incentive scheme to retain facilitators; (iii) making their own arrangements for classroom accommodation and a store to keep the materials; (iv) providing chalkboards; and (v) making available at least 25 prospective learners.

- Only 19 percent of the community member and parent respondents had registered as adult learners. Main reasons for not registering were already literate (50%) and old age (46%). Twenty five percent of respondents who were not registered adult learners visited the classes. The latter rated the classes as a promising venture (75%) or a waste of time (25%). Literacy classes were held three times a week (54.5%) or everyday (29%).

- Ninety one percent of the respondents' spouses were not registered as adult learners because: (i) it is dangerous to leave the house empty in the evenings (76%); (ii) long distance of learning center from the residence (22%); and (iii) poor eye-sight (1%).

Attitude towards community participation

Community members and parents are favorably disposed to the idea of communities participating in the provision of basic education. Issues that received the highest positive score were: (i) basic education should be compulsory; and (ii) parents and communities have a responsibility to contribute to the provision of basic education. On the other hand, respondents had the impression that: (i) some of the demands on them by the community/PTA leaders in the affairs of the school were unrealistic; (ii) they don't have the financial means to do more for the school; and (iii) the whole policy of making basic education schools community-based should be reviewed.

e. Results from facilitators

- Respondents who have actually registered for adult literacy classes constituted a majority in 6 of the 24 communities sampled. In some cases recruiting learners was easy: (i) they came to register voluntarily without being prompted (46%); and (ii) churches and other religious bodies championed the enrollment drive vigorously (20.5%). In other areas facilitators had difficulties enrolling learners because: (i) potential learners felt it was a waste of time considering the benefits gained (37.5%); (ii) thought they were too old to learn (28%); and (iii) initially thought they were going to learn English and not the local language (22%).

- Communities encouraged facilitators in their work by: (i) being ready to assist the class in times of need (19%); (ii) donations of materials (15%); (iii) having elders regularly visit the classes (13.5%); (iv) providing kerosene (10%); and (v) respecting the facilitator (10%). Situations that discouraged facilitators' involvement in the program included: (i) poor attendance (48%); (ii) interruptions of scheduled class activities by the community programs (13%); (iii) lack of any incentives for facilitators (13%); and (iv) uncooperative attitude of the community (11%).

- Facilitators expected the community to: (i) encourage learners to attend classes (44%); (ii) build a learning center to stop dependence on sharing the primary school classroom (34.5%); and (iii) provide permanent library (10%). Nevertheless, the main support received from the community to promote the classes was to provide permanent meeting places (30%).

- For 75 percent of facilitators, attitudes of the community members have an impact on the quality of adult classes, thus: (i) spouses' support encourages attendance; (ii) the kind attitude of community towards the facilitator encourages him to teach to the best of his ability; (iii) some derogatory remarks affect the morale of the learners and dampen their spirit; (iv) the unsupportive attitude of husbands discourages female attendance; and (v) the indifference of community members results in the lack of some essential materials.

- Ninety two percent of facilitators rated the quality of adult literacy program as either good, very good or excellent based on the following: (i) learners can now read and write; (ii) learners respond actively to lessons; (iii) the lives of learners is markedly improved; and (iv) learners have become aware of various employment and self-employment opportunities.

- The most important means by which the community is made aware of its role in helping to provide quality adult literacy are: (i) public education of the community at general community meetings convened by the chief or the TDC (34%); (ii) through public education at Christian gatherings (34%); and (iii) through the chief and elders (26%).

- Fifty six percent of the respondents indicated that they would have more learners registered if there was room to accommodate more learners. However, only 23 percent of facilitators had to turn back prospective adult learners because of lack of space.

- Seventy nine percent of facilitators have had dropout cases among their learners because: (i) learners moved from the community; (ii) women dropped because of opposition from their husbands; (iii) they became dissatisfied with progress being made; and (iv) time of classes was not convenient.

f. Correlation between participation, access to, and quality of education

Quality of education was measured by achievements in the English and mathematics tests in Primary Class 5 and JSS Form 2, and in a general test in adult literacy classes. See results in Table 2.

Table 2: Test scores

	English (P5) (max. = 40)	Math (P5) (max. = 40)	English (JSS) (max. = 50)	Math (JSS) (max. = 50)	Adult Literacy (max. = 50)
Average	10.60	13.3	16.4	13.1	15.6
Standard Deviance	3.10	4.3	6.5	2.7	4.4
Correlation coefficient	0.69		0.7		

Achievements are generally low even if important variations exist between the communities. At the primary level, no community reached the acceptable minimum standard of achievement of 50 percent in English and only two reached it in mathematics (see Section 4.c). At the JSS level, three communities reached it in English but none in mathematics. In adult literacy classes, no community reached it.

Table 3: Levels of participation by endowment and achievement

Levels of participation	Total participation score (max. = 20)	School endowment (%)	School academic achievement (T-score as %)
High participation community (n=7)	13.7	62.2	51.0
Average participation community (n=14)	10.6	61.1	49.6
Low participation community (n=3)	7.6	56.9	49.2

Tested at a level of significance of 0.5, correlation analysis show a strong positive correlation between community participation (as rated by teachers) and school achievement (Rho = 0.81). The correlation between participation and school endowment (Rho = 0.16) as well as between school endowment and school achievement (Rho = 0.17) are positive, but not strong. The in-group correlation analysis to find the level Rho produced the following results:

- High participation with achievement: Rho = 0.18
- Average participation with achievement: Rho = 0.42
- Low participation with achievement: Rho = 0.13

As can be seen from the correlation figures, the analysis show positive but weak correlation between the sets of scores based on the three identified levels of community participation.

From the findings of the study, a strong positive relationship exists between community participation and quality of education. The high-level participation is related to higher quality of education and the low-level participation is also related to a lower quality of education. This seems to validate the hypothesis that where the level of participation is high, the quality of education is high. The situation, according to this study, appears different with regard to the relationship between community participation and school endowment. Though the analysis produced a positive correlation, the low correlational figure shows a weak relationship. This is taken to mean that though the level of community participation and the quantified level of school endowment move in the same direction, the level of school endowment is not influenced or determined much by the level of community participation.

g. *The case of the Equity Improvement Program (EIP)*

Findings from the evaluation of four pilot projects from the EIP are outlined in Table 4. These projects have proved that consciously awakened participatory spirit can produce amazing and effective performance by even very poor and illiterate communities. The implementation of the projects had resulted in increased access and retention in basic education schools. It also resulted in a new awareness of responsibilities that had dawned on members of the community with regard to their relationship with the school, especially with regard to the teaching/learning process.

Table 4: Results of the project interventions

Project	Access rates (%)	Retention rates (%)	Quality of education	Community involvement
Scholarship Project	Project increased access to girls 1991-92: 22.8% 1993-94: 33.6%	Project promoted high retention rates among girls 1991-92: 94.2% 1993-94: 99.2%	Girls performed favorably with boys in class	Very high Regular visits to school by parents
Community Involvement Project	Community actively involved in enrollment drive 1991-92: 38.6% 1993-94: 68.9%	Project promoted higher retention rates 1991-92: 92.5% 1993-94: 98.4%	Improved as a result of parents' supervision and provision of basic learning needs	Active involvement of community
Increased Retention Competition Project	Project increased access 1991-92: 29.5% 1993-94: 91.4%	Project was very good for retention 1991-92: 95.2% 1993-94: 98.4%	Improved through regular attendance of teachers and pupils	Community keenly involved in project and other school activities
Furniture Project	Project increased access 1991-92: 46.1% 1993-94: 70.8%	Project proved to have a very high retention ability 1991-92: 84.9% 1993-94: 97.1%	Improved quality through good interactions	Very high Community became very protective of project facilities

Above all, these projects have proved to the education authorities that communities, including PTAs, are capable of contributing to the management and development of the school far more than they did previously. What is necessary to get the best out of communities in their participatory roles is the right motivation.

6. *Discussion of results*

a. *Types and forms of community participation*

Types of community participation

It is possible to categorize the types of participation into six groups based on who initiated the participation: government, community, PTA, religious body, donor, or individuals.

- **Government:** Officials or agents of the government, the MOE or the GES design strategies to make community members aware of what they can do to help schools in their communities. The ultimate beneficiary of such government-initiated community participation is the school. Communities were made to understand that government is not shirking its responsibility by asking for community participation in basic education. In most cases, participation comes to communities as responsibilities assigned to them in policy statements. This approach, according to results, is most objectionable to the communities. They have expressed the feeling that, as partners in the provision of education, policy makers ought to consult them on such responsibilities to be sure the communities have the capacity to take them up.

- **Community:** Either the chief and his council of Elders or the TDC identify a school need, on their own or upon request from the head teacher, and mobilize both human and material resources to address it. This assistance was common and particularly important in schools where a healthy relationship existed between the teachers and the community, and in communities with a good number of educated residents. An important ingredient for the existence of this type of participation is the prevalence of peace and unity within the community.

- **PTA:** In practical terms, the PTA is the organ of the community that is always most current with the needs and problems of the school. It is a forum where teachers and parents meet as partners to educate the children with the sole aim of bringing their minds together to solve thorny problems that inhibit smooth teaching and learning in school. Among all the stakeholders in education, apart from the learners themselves, parents are the most concerned and anxious group. It is not surprising therefore to note the numerous instances of initiation and execution of projects by parents within their respective schools. Mobilizing parents to sponsor school projects is relatively easy.

- **Religious body:** In some cases, religious bodies, especially Christian missions, initiated community participation in education, particularly in establishing of schools. The members of the religious bodies consider this role as part of their Christian duties rather than safe-guarding the future self-sustainability of their children. The recent development in the area of religious body initiation of participation in basic education is entry of the Moslem groups. The original Arabic school system has given way to the establishment of secular schools with their own school management units.

- **Donor assistance:** Many communities take advantage of rural community assistance packages available in the various diplomatic missions to initiate school-based projects. The policy of most donor agencies and diplomatic missions has been to tie community participation to support for self-help projects. Usually, a definite proportion of the total cost of the project is borne by the community in the form of communal labor or the supply of some needed materials for the project.

- **Individual member:** Some individual community members, in seeking to assist either the school or the community, have identified school needs and addressed these needs using their own resources. The main objective of such individuals is to provide an opportunity for the children in the community to climb the education ladder and rise to the highest level of their abilities.

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Forms of community participation

Manifestations of community participation in Ghanaian schools can be categorized into traditional and new or shifting forms of participation. The *traditional forms* are those that most communities know and have practiced for years. In many communities, the whole idea and vision of participation is limited to these traditional forms and anything else is considered outside their competence. Here, community participation is essentially concerned with the provision of infrastructure for the school. Traditional participation includes: (i) engaging in communal labor to provide infrastructure in the school; (ii) making monetary contributions to finance school projects; (iii) providing residential accommodation for teachers; (iv) providing rooms in personal houses to be used to store school property; (v) providing land for gardening, farming, etc.; (vi) churches allowing their chapels to be used for classes; (vii) parents attending PTA meetings; (viii) attending school functions such as "open days;" and (ix) supplying the needs of their wards. Most of the communities studied generally have been living up to the expectation with regard to traditional participation. Except in such areas as workshop construction where communities act upon directives from the MOE, most communities have identified the school needs by themselves or with the assistance of the head teacher and initiated actions to solve them.

Shifting forms of participation are participatory activities that are relatively new and an integral part of the educational reform program launched in 1987, where communities have a right to participate in activities and decisions affecting the curriculum and management of the schools. Here, community participation takes the form of: (i) managing of schools through representation on the SMCs; (ii) designing curriculum; (iii) serving as resource persons to teach about some culture-oriented themes; (iv) protecting and maintaining school property; (v) supervising and monitoring pupils' attendance at school; (vi) increasing pupils' access to basic education through enrollment drives; (vii) motivating teachers to improve their effectiveness; and (viii) supervising pupils' studies at home. These shifting forms of participation, though relatively new and not as common in the school as the traditional form, have been found to be very effective in the few schools where they were found.

b. The varying levels of community participation

Contrary to the assertion of head teachers and teachers that community participation is determined by financial capabilities of community members, findings have shown that the level of participation is determined more by attitude and good-will, which depend on relevant knowledge, rather than financial considerations. Creating awareness for community participation involves providing information, education, and communication on the: (i) need for communities to participate; (ii) variety of forms of participation available to the community; and (iii) availability of external stimuli such as assistance packages of donor agencies for community self-initiated school projects. MOE/GES officials understood the importance of creating awareness within the communities, but the representatives who attended the regional workshops organized by the government did not successfully disseminate the new thinking on community participation at the grassroots level. This explains why over 52.5 percent of teachers and 46 percent of parents and community members admitted lack of knowledge of the awareness effort made by the MOE/GES.

Although many communities did know that basic education institutions have become community-based, some did not really understand the implications of the concept in terms of community rights and responsibilities. Though 26 percent of the parents and community members indicated that they were aware of the community-based nature of the schools, a small percentage of them linked the concept with the various community responsibilities. One thing was clear from the results: higher levels of community participation were found in communities in which MOE/GES made conscious efforts to create awareness and to promote participation in school activities.

c. Levels of participation and other related variables

The level of participation was generally high in the few areas where parents identified themselves with the fate and problems of their wards in school. This identification with one's own child's needs and problems increased the resolve and determination of such parents to want to remove those obstacles to the learning process at all costs. Clearly some of these parents even considered participation as a natural and indeed civic responsibility.

PTA meetings are patronized more in the urban communities than in the peri-urban and rural communities. This finding may appear to contradict common sense and normal expectations. One would expect that in the rural communities, being more compact, information about meetings would be easier to circulate and parents would find it easier to get to meeting venues than their counterparts in the urban communities. This may be explained by the fact that the meeting times of the PTA coincide with other activities (mainly economic) of parents and that the illiterate members of the rural communities, whether they attend or not, will get to hear of decisions taken all the same.

Findings show that the level of participation in the service areas, such as the use of community members as resource persons, is low. These are areas where community members can only initiate participation when invited. Moreover, the areas of the curriculum that community members can easily handle are limited in scope, restricted primarily to cultural and practical topics. In order to raise the level of community participation, appropriate and most convenient forms of participation must be identified for any given community and its individual members. Communities should be encouraged to participate in areas in which they have comparative capability and, therefore, policy makers should not impose a common set of responsibilities on all communities without regard to their capabilities.

The heads of schools play a crucial role in raising the level of community participation. Many community members perceive their participation as favors to either the school-head or the teachers. They are therefore more inclined to assist an understanding and approachable head teacher than assist one who does not relate well to them.

d. Factors that affect community participation

Factors influencing community participation vary depending on environmental, cultural, and socio-economic circumstances of the given community. The following are considered important:

- **Attitude.** Communities' knowledge and perception about their participation is crucial in determining whether participation will be high or low. In most parts of Ghana, education is valued despite the fact that many school-leavers are unemployed. Virtually every parent sees education as the surest route for the child to enjoy a higher standard of life in future. This expectation is a strong factor in tilting the attitude of the community, especially parents, in favor of participation.

- **Motivation.** Results from the Equity Improvement Program (EIP) provide a good indication of what level of community participation can be induced with the appropriate bait. The EIP projects served as fillip to the communities for the development of their schools and to pride themselves on having played significant roles in the development of the schools. The government can learn a lot from EIP in motivating communities to participate actively and effectively.

- **Good local leadership.** For any community to take up its responsibilities in the provision of basic education effectively, there must be good local leadership. Leaders comprise traditional rulers and also the TDC, the community youth and development associations, and the churches or various religious groups. Effective mobilization results in effective participation. In the present study, community members stated that good leadership makes mobilizing the community easy whereas the lack of it makes it difficult to get the community to participate.

- **Good communication link.** A good communication link between the MOE or GES officials and the communities is essential to develop community awareness of their roles. A link between the community and the school should also be established because it is one of the most important motivating factors for community participation. An effective school-community link can be established and strengthened when the school authorities make it a point to get the school involved in some community activities. This communication link can be maintained when teachers interact freely with community members. The initiative for establishing the communication link should come from the school, i.e., the teachers.

- **Enlightening community members.** Participation is readily embraced by the enlightened community members. This, of course was not unexpected since, generally, people accept things and are ready to take up responsibilities which they understand or whose value they appreciate. This finding would seem to emphasize the importance of campaigns for literacy in the communities. These campaigns certainly have multiplier effects on creating access and improving the quality of basic education through higher levels of community participation.

- **Encouraging community-initiated participation.** While many respondents among parents, community leaders, and community members did not object to participation, they objected to the idea that either government or ministry officials would decide what responsibilities of the schools the communities should shoulder without any consultations or any assessment of the capabilities of the communities to cope with those responsibilities. Respondents would prefer to initiate their own projects for the schools.

- **Availability of basic organizational structures.** The TDCs and the SMCs were found, where they exist, to be very reliable vehicles for promoting community participation. Such committees are generally set up with well-defined terms of references that focus on school development and are found usually to be more functional in the rural areas than in the urban areas. This may be because most residents in urban areas are migrants who are unable to identify themselves fully with the destinies of the communities in which they reside. Similarly, other organizational structures such as the PTAs are considered very important for facilitating community participation.

- **Unity within the communities.** Since communities generally come together to assist the school, divided communities often deny themselves the advantages inherent in coordinated and united mass action. However, some forms of divisions within the community, especially on religious grounds, may result in a very healthy competition of community participation in schools, for example, in terms of what each can do to make its school more attractive to incoming pupils.

e. Impact of community participation on access and retention

From the results of the EIP Evaluation project, two forms of access to basic education emerged: those who are known to have enrolled for the first time in schools and those who had dropped out earlier but returned to school. The result of that project showed evidence of increased access, and increases in the access and retention rates could be linked to various roles played by the communities in the schools, particularly the schools' enrollment drive with the established project interventions serving as stimuli.

The connection between community participation and access to education either in the formal or nonformal sectors, as revealed in the EIP study report, is confirmed by the result of the respondents in this study. For example, all the teacher respondents who indicated that their communities cooperated with the school in its enrollment drive (51%) also indicated that this cooperation resulted in improvements in the enrollments of the schools. Similarly 56 percent of facilitators confirmed that their enrollment drive was successful due to community involvement in recruiting learners. However, they could not absorb all those who sought enrollment because of lack of space. In short, community participation in providing infrastructural facilities, organizing enrollment drives, motivating teachers, and creating awareness of the benefits of education among community members generally leads to increased access and retention of pupils in school.

f. Impact of community participation on quality of education

Under normal circumstances, quality of education in any school is most enhanced by the following conditions: (i) availability of qualified and motivated teachers; (ii) availability of teaching/learning materials in adequate quantities; (iii) conducive learning environment; and (iv) good and effective supervision. Anybody or any action that promotes the achievement of the conditions stated above contributes to improving the quality of education. That the community can play a major role in establishing and sustaining each of these conditions is confirmed by the results from data collected from all categories of respondents. Some teachers, for instance, identified the failure of parents to provide the basic needs of their wards as an area where lack of participation adversely affects teaching and learning in schools.

As many as 75 percent of facilitators indicated that the response of community members to the needs and problems of the adult literacy classes had a positive effect on the quality of learning in the literacy classes. On the other hand, they mentioned lack of sympathetic support from spouses as a reason for poor quality performance by some learners.

7. *Conclusions and recommendations*

A major objective of this study was to use the results to make recommendations to help the government formulate educational policy with regard to the concept of community participation in the provision, administration, and maintenance of basic education in Ghana. Conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented below.

a. Conclusions

- A majority of the communities studied have shown their willingness to participate in the provision, management, and maintenance of schools in their communities. Community participation is not new and some communities had played significant roles in the education of their children in the past. The difference between community participation now and then is that before the introduction of the basic education policy, the communities themselves decided to undertake school projects they thought they could afford. Under the present system, the MOE decides the projects communities should undertake without consulting with them and without considering their capabilities. In this regard, community participation is seen more or less by the people as a top-down rather than a bottom-up policy.

- People are aware that the new system of basic education has reduced the length of time their children take to complete the first cycle of education, and are appreciative. This is a positive sign that creating more awareness about the advantages that communities stand to gain from their participation would go a long way to motivate them to increase their contribution to sustain the reforms within the basic education system.

- Active community participation in basic education is severely obstructed by poverty, illiteracy, ignorance of the need for community participation, poor communication links, lack of jobs for school-leavers and misconceptions about the concept of free, basic education. Very little can be done by the MOE to alleviate poverty to encourage community participation. Since the lower the awareness of people that the community is a partner of the school, the lower the level of participation by the community. But a lot can be done to educate the public on their moral obligation toward the survival of basic education in their communities by raising the community's awareness that they are a partner and must participate.

- Participation in the form of the pedagogical assistance counts very little in communities. This is to be expected, especially in the rural areas since the people lack pedagogical expertise required in the basic education system.

- The amount and type of assistance provided by the communities vary with the environment in which the school is situated and reflect the economic strengths of the various settlements. This is normal. What is worrisome, however, is that the rural communities are less involved in managing the schools through PTA activities.

- The relationship between the community and the school is not one-way. The communities benefit from the schools just as the schools benefit from the communities. School assistance to the community helps to bring the community and the school together to see themselves in a symbiotic relationship.

- Although community participation is emphasized, government continues to play a leading role in decisions regarding the establishment of schools and in providing the bulk of the money and materials needed. Whereas this arrangement is advantageous, especially to the deprived communities in the short run, in the long run, it could obstruct community participation because communities see the government as the bona fide provider of schools and, therefore, they stay away from the administration and maintenance of the schools.

- Access to school is a major concern of the basic education policy. Community awareness of the benefits of education and the determination of parents to have their children educated are two forces that drive parents to invest in their children's education. But the rising cost of living and high opportunity cost of schooling have dampened parents' aspirations for their children.

- The attitude of head teachers and teachers towards parents can motivate them to keep their children in school. Where head teachers and teachers respect the views of parents and community members, the latter are more likely to feel committed to the welfare of the school.

- Quite a large number of respondents are favorably disposed towards adult literacy classes. However, campaign efforts need to intensify to attract more illiterate adult and young school dropouts to enroll in the literacy classes.

b. Recommendations

- To translate the willingness of the communities to participate actively in the provision, administration, and maintenance of basic education in the communities, the bottom-up approach to community participation should be encouraged in all the communities.

- Creating community awareness of the benefits of education should include the concept of adult literacy classes. A large number of the people are ignorant of the fact that literacy classes are an integral part of the basic education system.

- The need to convince the people that the basic education system and its organization belongs to the community should be strongly emphasized.

- The MOE should give people involved in pedagogical assistance some skills to enable them to impart their knowledge to the children, as required.

- The low involvement of the rural communities in managing the schools through PTA activities should be rectified by convincing the elders and chiefs of the communities to encourage the people to set aside days for PTA meetings. In addition to using chiefs and elders to encourage their communities to send their children to school, parents, whose children are already in school, should be used as role models for the others to emulate.

- School assistance to the community should be encouraged in all basic education schools.

- The modalities for participation should be drawn up after a thorough study of the competencies and capabilities of the communities concerned has been made to avoid creating confusion and misunderstanding between teachers and the community.

- To encourage access of all school-age children to school, the problem of poverty in the society should be addressed.

- Head teachers and teachers should be advised to give due respect to parents in the community that they serve. Teachers also need to understand that they will win community support if they are seen to be hardworking.

- The research team endorses the following community members and parents recommendations aimed at encouraging higher levels of community participation:
    - Community sensitization on the need for their participation should be made an on-going process.
    - Information must flow freely between the school and the community.
    - An award scheme for community participation should be instituted to encourage competition among communities.
    - A more conscious effort should be made by both government and the MOE to educate the public on the government's financial limitation vis-a-vis resources required for basic education.
    - Participation in communal labor for schools should be made compulsory by legislation.

- Since effective management is essential for the success of the new basic education system, all district assemblies should be encouraged to put in place SMCs in all the schools.

- PTA meetings should be organized on days and times that are suitable to the communities, with the possibility of evening meetings also being explored.

- Communities should be encouraged to increase their support for the adult literacy classes.

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Chapter 7

Mali

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1. *Context of the study*

Having signed the Charter on Education adopted by African countries at the 1961 Addis Ababa Conference, Mali made a commitment to democratize its education sector, in an effort to combat illiteracy. Despite the ambitious reforms begun in 1962, and despite the subsequent establishment of a multi-party political system and the significant increase in community organization after 1991, the present picture with regard to education in Mali leaves a great deal to be desired. Faced with an unprecedented economic crisis (accentuated by the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994), a structural adjustment program, and the resulting austerity policies, the government can no longer fund its development activities. It must increasingly depend upon a partnership that is based upon the people's participation in the development process. This approach to participation provides the basis for the decentralization process that was identified as one of the central goals of the Third Republic, and which is a key strategic element in the democratization of education.

2. *Issues*

With respect to basic education, Mali's education system is marked by an imbalance between a level of educational demand that is driven by strong demographic pressure and a level of supply that is inadequate due to the relative lack of existing resources and their precarious nature. According to statistics provided by the planning and statistical unit of the Ministry of Basic Education (MEB, 1998), the gross enrollment rate (around 50 percent) and the net enrollment rate (25.3 percent) for children between 13 and 15 years old are very low. Moreover, the under-15 age group makes up a significant proportion of the country's overall population. As far as external returns are concerned, Mali's system has little impact on economic and social development, because it does not reflect the country's realities and needs. As far as internal returns are concerned, for the 1996/97 school year, the average promotion rate at the primary level is 77.1 percent, while the grade-repetition rate is 20 percent, and the dropout rate is 3.5 percent. Lastly, the rate of educational coverage reveals inequalities between urban and rural areas, and between boys and girls (still to the disadvantage of girls).

Nonformal education can contribute toward attaining the objectives of education for all, but it also faces serious difficulties, such as: (i) the absence of a genuine policy of writing and publishing in national languages; (ii) the lack of communication between agencies involved in the field of literacy teaching and national education authorities; and (iii) the absence of an effective link between the formal and nonformal educational sectors. Thus, the educational needs of thousands of people are not being catered to. This includes young people who did not have the opportunity to go to school at the proper time, illiterate elderly people, and children who are excluded from school before they reach the point at which they can be sure that they will not regress to a state of illiteracy.

Broadening the base of the pyramid of the educational system has become the greatest priority for the country's education policy. Several strategies have been developed to encourage people to invest more in education, and populations are now participating actively in the promotion of basic education, both inside and outside organized communities. It is this phenomenon of community participation that the ERNWACA/Mali team has attempted to investigate through the present study. The aim of our study is to discover the Malian pattern of participation in developing the educational system, to identify the various fields in which participation occurs, and to measure its impact on access to and quality of education.

3. *Conceptual framework*

a. Definition of terms

For the purposes of this study, the community is defined as a group of people who acknowledge common or convergent interests, and who are located in a geographical space that is more or less circumscribed, depending on the nature of the ties uniting its members. Participation refers to any form of contribution—whether material, moral, financial, intellectual, or practical—that might be invested in promoting personal and/or collective interests. Basic education refers to the minimum knowledge, expertise, and social skills one needs to develop as an individual, to reach one's fullest potential, and to take one's place as an individual and member of a community in a changing context. Lastly, the effects of participation are the qualitative and quantitative results of the influence exerted on students' school results and on the life of the community by the direct and active involvement of the community.

b. Participation

Community participation is generally regarded as playing a significant role in the promotion of education, because it is thought to:

- increase the mobilization of financial, human, and material resources necessary to improve the effectiveness of the education system;

- adapt education to the needs, problems, aspirations and interest of the beneficiary population;
- with respect to equity, fulfil one of the necessary pre-conditions for democratizing education;
- enable the political authority or administration responsible for setting standards to work closely with the social group among whom those standards must be applied.

Participation interests researchers also because it concerns decision-making at all stages of the educational process: orientation, planning, and implementation. Participation can be practiced at both national and local levels, and may refer to both a management technique and a mechanism for democratization. The development and diversification of social groups raise an important question related to participation: how can different social groups with divergent interests participate in defining choices that must govern the lives of men and women within a society? To understand the different strategies that may be embraced by the idea of *participation*, our researchers tried to define a typology of participation. Guy Le Boterf (1980) distinguishes between two analytical criteria: the community's level of involvement in the decision-making process and communities' level of initiative.

At the level of involvement in decision-making, Le Boterf defines three types of participation:

- Purely formal, or nominal participation. This involves a one-way flow of information.

- Participation that is limited to consultation. This enables communities to react to the information received and to express their opinions, but also requires a number of minimal conditions, such as: guarantees of freedom of expression and association, communities' access to necessary information and the opportunity to subject that information to critical analysis and to search for new information, the chance to have enough time to receive and process the information received, and the political will to take the opinions into account.

- Participation that involves the sharing of power. This type of participation raises the question of the distribution of the decision-making power and refers to decision-making procedures and institutions. In certain instances—often of limited duration—this type of participation can lead to self-management, with the community thus becoming responsible for its own decisions.

More recently, and based on this same criterion, Boubacar Sow (1994) has suggested that with respect to administration, participation can be manifested in four ways, according to a process of growing involvement: information, consultation, dialogue, and co-management.

Regarding communities' level of initiative, Le Boterf identifies three other forms of participation:

- Spontaneous or voluntary participation. This form of participation is quite rare. It refers to occasions when a social group takes the initiative to participate in a process or an activity. It is manifested in situations where people seize power or engage in self-management, based on collectively recognized educational needs.

- Solicited participation. This is the most frequent form, and refers to situations in which the authorities themselves take the initiative to promote participation in educational experiences, reforms, or innovations. It can be used in the context of efforts to achieve integration or to reduce social tensions as well as in the context of efforts to achieve genuine democratization of education.

- Mandatory participation. This is found in certain programs designed to mobilize communities in areas such as the supply of manpower or financial contributions.

c. Institutions and areas of participation in education

In addition to the typologies of participation, a review of the relevant literature identified the institutions that participate most often in schools. The composition of these institutions reflects that of the basic community, according to the country concerned. The institutions include: (i) students' parents associations, teacher associations, and committees for the collection of community funds (Burma); (ii) committees of elected local officials or national school students' service (India); (iii) the education, culture, and social welfare committee (Tanzania); and (iv) the school council (Cuba).

In general terms, institutions concerned with community participation are involved in educational funding and managing of the educational process. Participation in educational funding is reflected most often in community support in the form of unpaid manpower, donations in kind or in cash, and education taxes. Thus, in Burma, community support for education funding takes the form of donations in kind, designed to meet the needs of teachers, the operating costs of educational activities, and the salaries of teaching and/or non-teaching staff. In India, this type of support is manifested in the supply of land, school buildings, and teachers' accommodations; maintenance work on school buildings; and the provision of equipment for school cafeterias. In Tanzania, local participation, between 1967 and 1975, led to a total investment in school facilities and teachers' accommodations of more than 21 million dollars. Lastly, in Mali, the support of Students' Parents Associations (APEs) in the funding of education has been especially reflected in the construction of schools and the equipping of schools and classrooms (B. Sidi Cissé, 1984).

Community participation in managing of the educational process—that is, in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational activities—has taken a number of different forms, depending on the country. With respect to the design of educational programs, Peru has involved communities in formulating "situational diagnostics," which were used to design educational programs during the country's educational reform process [during the 1970s]. In Tanzania, in the wake of the educational reform process, schools strove hard to involve the community in their own activities. From 1974 onward, Benin's "Education and Development-Initiative" used the results of the identification and analysis of local problems performed by the communities themselves to promote concerted actions affecting every area of daily life.

Because schools in developing countries no longer provide a guarantee of employment, they must open themselves up to a social-development role and ensure that their teaching processes offer activities leading to change. Thus, the participation of communities in formulating educational programs can help the school become more functional, by ensuring that such programs are relevant to the school's surrounding environment and by ensuring that the school is able to respond to its needs. As to the implementation of educational activities, analysis of the main participatory experiences indicates that the community can take part directly in the teaching process and, to a lesser degree, in the administration of teaching staff. However, these experiences occur more often in the informal context than in the formal context.

d. The different forms of participation in Mali

Following the country's independence in the early 1960s, community participation in Mali took the form of investments in human resources, centered on providing manpower and local materials for the construction of school infrastructures—including accommodation for teachers and literacy instructors. This kind of participation rapidly lost popular support, mainly because: (i) people lacked information concerning the duration and objectives of their participation; (ii) participation was mandatory and repressive; and (iii) people lacked confidence, caused by the delays in seeing results.

Popular participation was replaced in 1968 by the special-tax regime, taking the form of contributions made to mass organizations. The chaotic development of the special-tax regime and the lack of transparency in its management again provoked unrest and resistance among the population. In 1988, the government salvaged the special-tax regime by creating the Regional and Local Development Tax (TDRL), which integrates the earlier contributions into the government budget by means of a special account. The government thus sanctioned the mandatory and legitimate nature of people's financial participation in education. Presently, the main sources of funding for development actions include the TDRL and the contributions made by foreign nationals and NGOs in addition to the funds collected by the APEs. The APEs constitute the most important mechanism for funding educational development activities, and they are playing an increasingly important role in Mali's schools.

In general, community participation in administering education is inseparable from its sociopolitical context, for it is this context that determines the possibilities and limitations. Participation cannot be considered in purely educational terms. It is above all a political question which, according to Le Boterf (1980), can be conceived on a large scale only "during political changes that provide the necessary conditions in which to develop the democratization of education." Following the application of Mali's Decentralization Law, in March 1991, the conditions may now be in place to encourage a form of participation that takes better account of the problems, needs, and interests of Mali's people and gives them a greater degree of responsibility.

4. Methodology

Our study attempts to verify two hypotheses: (i) the higher the level of community participation, the higher the quality of basic education; and (ii) the higher the level of community participation, the stronger the access to education.

The research team constructed a general scale of participation, based on the scores achieved in questionnaires for each form of participation. Financial participation, with a maximum score of 8, was given a weight of 1; participation in educational supervision, with a maximum score of 5, was given a weight of 2; participation in decision-making, with a maximum score of 9, was given a weight of 3. On the basis of the weighted scores, the study distinguished between three levels of participation: (i) low participation, corresponding to scores on the general scale lower than 10; (ii) average participation, equivalent to scores between 10 and 19; and (iii) strong participation equivalent to scores higher than 19.

a. Analytical model and definition of variables

Community participation, which constitutes the independent variable of the study, is analyzed in the following three areas:

- educational funding—that is, material and financial participation, including the construction, repair, and maintenance of school facilities, and the purchase of supplies and furniture;
- management of the educational process—that is, participation in educational supervision, including the monitoring of facilities, the contents of school programs, and financial management;
- management of staff and students—that is, participation in decision-making, including payment of teachers' wages, construction of their accommodation, responsibility for school feeding, and administrative management of schools.

Access to basic education, the first dependent variable in our study, is measured in terms of the availability of school infrastructures and the demand for education. It is measured by enrollment rates. This is a quantitative variable, which depends on relationships of scale.

The quality of basic education, which is the second dependent variable in our study, refers to the quality of the process (availability of teaching materials, infrastructures, and the teaching method) and to the quality of results, measured by an indicator of school results (promotion, repetition, and drop-out rates). This variable is measured according to the level of equipment in the classrooms and the mastery of instrumental and professional knowledge linked to the life of the community. It is also a quantitative variable whose results depend on relationships of scale. The teaching method was not taken into account in this study.

b. Sample

The study covered five of Mali's administrative regions: Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, and Mopti, as well as the district of Bamako. It was concerned with the role played by the different participants in the administration of education, especially: the APEs and/or any other organization involved in the basic education sector, school administrators, teachers, and students.

The sample combined stratified and random sampling methods. Stratification was determined by region, by type of community (rural or urban), and by type of school (public school, private school, community school, Muslim school, or literacy center). Within each stratum, researchers made random selections. In all, 49 communities and schools were affected, 49 teachers and school principals were interviewed, and 355 students, or at least 14 students from one class within each school (8th grade for formal schools and final grade for the others) were interviewed. Their results in mathematics (arithmetic) and general knowledge (general culture and knowledge of health matters) were evaluated through standardized tests, and comparisons made on the basis of standardized averages.

c. Data collection and analysis

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. With regard to data collection, while the qualitative approach involved analytical and random methods (interviews, focus group, and observation), the quantitative approach involved comparative methods (test and questionnaire). In all, 8 tools were developed and field-tested. With regard to data analysis and processing, qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. Quantitative data were entered with the DBase program, and processed with SPSS. The statistical analysis tools consisted of univariate analysis with respect to the frequencies, bivariate analysis for the study of the relationships between variables, and multivariate analysis for explanatory purposes. The units of analysis were the community, the school, and the class. With regard to the class, students' individual and sociocultural characteristics were included, in order to ensure that the only differences observed were those that were due to community participation.

5. Results

The results of the study are presented in three sections: (i) the forms of community participation in Mali; (ii) the impact of community participation on access and equity; and (iii) the influence of other variables (linear multiple regression).

a. Forms of community participation in Mali

Characteristics of communities surveyed

- The educational situation within the communities surveyed is characterized by the predominance of public schools with respect to other types of school.

- The educational development institutions are nearly all APEs or, to a lesser degree, management and literacy committees.

- Communities believe that the main roles of the APEs, management committees, and literacy committees are to: (i) support village development; (ii) assist in developing the school by supporting the teachers and the principal; (iii) help the government combat illiteracy; and (iv) ensure equity with respect to access to education among village families. Very few respondents thought they had a role to play in terms of educating children or motivating the population. Moreover, the communities do not take a favorable view of the government's withdrawal, especially in rural areas.

- According to the global participation scale constructed as part of the study, the level of community participation in education efforts is low in 31 percent of cases, average in 44.8 percent of cases, and high in 24.1 percent of cases.

- Overall, the participation of the community in the education effort is voluntary in 55 percent of cases and solicited in around 14 percent of cases.

- Among the communities surveyed, 31 percent have developed educational development plans. Of these development plans (Table 1), more than 70 percent comprise activities directly linked to efforts to increase access: construction and renovation of classrooms, and the purchase of furniture and supplies. Lastly, 22 percent of activities are linked to the health/nutrition of the children: school canteen, health unit, and vegetable garden. Girls' education appears in only 4 percent of the activities identified in the development plans.

Table 1: Actions planned under development plans

Planned activities	Frequency (n=27)	%
Construction of classroom	13	48.1
Renovation of classroom	3	11.1
Purchase of furniture and supplies	3	11.1
Installation of school canteens	2	7.4
Construction of health unit	2	7.4
Vegetable garden	2	7.4
Development of girls' education	1	3.7
Maintenance of sports field	1	3.7

- The experience of communities in managing and implementing activities (Table 2) is essentially as follows: (i) funding: approximately 70 percent of the community experience is made up of contributions and the construction of classrooms and school fences; (ii) management of the educational process: in addition to weak participation in problem-management committees, the majority of communities (72%) are not involved; and (iii) the management of teaching staff: participation consists of monitoring and choosing appropriate teachers and recruitment of teachers.

- This participation nonetheless remains complex and multifaceted. Thus, in the sample:
    - Material and financial participation (funding of education): one classroom out of four was entirely constructed by the community, and the community partially participated in constructing all the others. The community is involved in repairing classroom doors and windows in 41 percent of schools, but in the schools where participation is high, this proportion rises to almost 60 percent. Communities participate, lastly, in the purchase of school supplies in 41 percent of schools and in the purchase of teaching materials in less than 14 percent of cases. Moreover, they do not participate in the purchase of school textbooks in 79 percent of schools, and this does not depend on the level of participation by the community.

Table 2: Level of participation in the development of education

Level of participation	Answers	Frequency	%
Funding (n=67)	Construction of classroom, fence	29	43.3
	Financial contributions	18	26.9
	Physical support	7	10.4
	Purchase of textbooks	6	8.9
	Teachers' wages	5	7.5
	Provision of materials	2	3.0
Management of educational process (n=47)	Not involved	34	72.3
	Problem-management committee	9	19.2
	Management of schools/materials	2	4.3
	Recruitment of students	2	4.3
Management of staff and students (n=45)	Monitoring and appropriate selection of teachers	31	68.9
	Recruitment of teachers	14	31.1

- Participation in educational supervision (management of the educational process): although participation in the definition of teaching goals affects only 10 percent of schools and is concentrated on village schools, the data show that the participation of the community in this activity is a good indicator of community participation overall. Indeed, the higher the level of community participation, the greater the involvement of the population in defining the learning objectives. In the same way, participation in the definition of the school schedule is effective in 24 percent of schools, but the greater the level of participation, the greater the community's participation in the definition of the school schedule. Lastly, according to 38 percent of teachers questioned, community members participate in the transfer of knowledge. Here too, this situation is observed mainly when the level of participation is higher.

- Participation in decision-making: communities decided on the creation of almost 60 percent of schools and on the extension of almost 35 percent. Almost 60 percent of classrooms were constructed by the communities. This participation was total in 24 percent of cases and supported by partners in the other cases. If, in general, there are no canteens in the schools, the communities do contribute to paying teachers' wages in 24 percent of schools and covering operating costs in 21 percent of cases. Here, the schools are distinguished by the level of community participation. Thus, the higher the level of community participation, the greater the involvement of the community in paying teachers' wages.

◆ Although the vast majority of communities believe that they have a role to play in managing assets, funds, and the educational process, their effective involvement is as follows: (i) the community is not generally invited to participate in identifying learning objectives, and most communities consider that this is the concern of the school administration; (ii) the majority do not participate in identifying the contents of learning; (iii) community members transfer knowledge mostly as resource persons for early-learning and art activities; and (iv) with regard to the design of teaching materials, the situation varies according to the type of school, but when there is participation, it usually involves adjusting the school schedule to local activities.

- The main difficulties in participation encountered by the communities are: (i) the lack of resources and facilities; (ii) the refusal of parents to educate their children; (iii) the refusal to pay fees; (iv) delays in payment of teachers' wages; (v) absenteeism by teachers; and (vi) the lack of staff.

- Moreover, the main obstacles to community participation (Table 3) in developing education are essentially the lack of resources, due to poverty among the population, the lack of information on the benefits of education, and specific problems linked to the APEs (management of funds and lack of communication).

Table 3: Factors hindering community participation in the educational process

Restrictive factors	Frequency (n=80)	%
Poverty and lack of resources	30	37.5
Lack of information	15	18.7
Poor management of APE funds	10	12.5
Lack of communication/transparency among APEs	8	10.0
Lack of interest in school	5	6.2
Children work in the fields	3	3.7
School fees	2	2.5
Lack of community involvment	2	2.5
The government ought to do everything	2	2.5
School far away	2	2.5
Graduate unemployment	1	1.2
Lack of staff	1	1.2

Characteristics of school sample

- The types of schools included in the sample are: (i) formal schools, created and managed by the government, where the schedule and the programs follow the national education policy and where the teaching language is the official language; these schools include public, private, religious, and secular schools; (ii) village schools, created and maintained by the communities that define the schedule and, partly, the curriculum, and where the teaching language is the local language; (iii) community schools, that are created and maintained by the communities on the basis of a ministerial decree, and which follow the official curriculum in the official language; (iv) Muslim schools, private schools that follow the official curriculum and offer Muslim religious instruction, and where the teaching language is Arabic; and (vi) the literacy centers, run by the government, these schools are designed for adults who did not receive formal schooling. The curricula are related to local practices, and the teaching language is the local language.

- In our sample, the facilities are either: (i) public schools (31%); (ii) private schools (17 percent); (iii) village schools (10.3 percent); (iv) community schools (6.9%); (v) Muslim schools (24.1%); or (vi) literacy centers (10.3 %).
- The average age of the schools in the sample is 9 years. However, this should not obscure the major disparities that exist between the types of school. The average age of public schools ranges from 15 to 88 years (giving an average age of 41 years), while the average age of community schools is 6 years.
- The average number of classroom seats is 32. There are more seats available in the private schools.
- On average, each class has 20 books. Muslim schools have an average of only 4 reading books per class, while the public schools, on average, have 23 reading books. For arithmetic, community schools have 8 books per class, versus 15 in the public sector. However, overall, the literacy centers are best equipped with reading and arithmetic books, with 20 books per class in each case.

Student characteristics in school sample

- Overall, out of the 355 students included in the sample, around half (51%) are in formal schools (30% in private schools and 21% in public schools). The smallest group of students in the sample are from community schools, 8.5 percent of all students included.
- Reflecting the situation in Mali overall, 66 percent of students in the sample are from rural areas. Moreover, students in Muslim schools, like those of the private schools, are primarily from urban areas, while those at the literacy centers are mostly from rural areas. Another parallel to the situation in the country overall is the fact that 68 percent of students who took the mathematics test are boys. The Muslim schools provided the highest percentage of female students (with 37% of all girls included in the survey).
- Although the overall age bracket is 9 to 54, the average age of students is 13. There are major disparities, however, between the different types of school. The oldest students are found in the literacy centers (average age 19) and the youngest in the private schools (average age 11).
- Among the other characteristics of students included in our study: (i) more than 91 percent of students eat a meal in the morning and 95 percent at midday; (ii) 85 percent of the students have a radio at home; (iii) 26 percent of students benefited from pre-school education, and are primarily from an urban area. This is especially the case in the Muslim schools, where these students make up 51 percent of the total; (iv) 62.5 percent have a reading book, and Muslim schools have the highest percentage of students (45%) with a reading book; (v) a little less

than half of students (48%) receive help at home, and Muslim schools have the highest percentage of students receiving help at home (50%); (vi) 80 percent of students have a light at home for their homework; and (vii) 64 percent of students live less than one kilometer from the school; those who live more than 1 kilometer from their school are found above all in the Muslim schools (48%).

- More than 80 percent of students included in the sample are from schools with a low or average participation level, and more than 52 percent of the private school students attend a school where participation is low. On the other hand, community schools and literacy centers include the highest proportion of students who attend a school where participation is high. These latter two types of school are the ideal places in which to practice effective community participation.

- According to teachers, the level of attendance at lessons is high at all schools, with the exception of literacy centers and community schools, where the level is average, and even low. With regard to student dropout rates, 79 percent of teachers say that they are low. However, over 87 percent of teachers say that their students experience learning difficulties. This opinion is much more widespread in Muslim schools.

Teacher characteristics in school sample

Under the survey, data were collected on all teachers involved in testing the students. A total of 49 teachers were interviewed.

- The majority of teachers (55%) live in a rural area. Only in the case of the private schools included in the sample do all teachers live in an urban area.

- Teachers' length of service at their school ranges from 1 to 40 years, with an average length of 2 years. The average length of service is longest at the literacy centers and shortest in community schools and private schools.

- Eighty three percent of teachers are men. In community schools, all teachers are men.

- Teachers' level of qualification varies considerably: 34.5 percent have a degree, 3.4 percent are former pupils, 13.8 percent are literacy center graduates, and 10.3 percent have no specific status. The most highly qualified teachers (those with a degree), who are in theory the most competent, mostly work in private schools (100%) or public schools (67%) where the level of community participation is low. On the other hand, those with the lowest qualifications (literacy center graduates) work at the literacy centers (83%) and in community schools (75% former pupils) where the level of community participation is generally high.

- All teachers give out class work and 76 percent of teachers assign homework. This work is graded either on an individual or collective basis in class.

- Analysis of teachers' integration into the community, measured by meetings between the teacher and students' parents, shows that, overall, 72 percent of teachers meet with members of the community. These meetings occur most often in community schools.

- Analysis of teacher supervision, measured by the number of times the teacher is visited by the principal, the educational adviser, or the inspector/head of the relevant functional literacy zone (ZAF) during the school year, shows that schools are in general not sufficiently supervised. The data vary according to the type of school. The literacy centers, for example, are visited more often by the head of the ZAF. With regard to the quality of supervision provided, school principals and educational advisers visit more often than inspectors do. Lastly, community schools offer the highest number of model lessons, while public schools offer the least.

- On average, there are seven teachers' meetings during the school year. Teachers have the chance to meet each other most often in private and Muslim schools, and they meet each other least often in literacy centers.

b. The impact of community participation on access and equity

Effects of participation on the quality of education

The quality of education was measured on the basis of the level of equipment provided to the schools and the tests results.

- All schools are under-equipped in terms of teaching equipment, classroom equipment, and student equipment, and the level of community participation does not play a significant role in this regard. In this situation of general deficiency, the public schools seem to be the best equipped, and among all the types of equipment, the curriculum is the most easily obtained.

- The results of the knowledge tests, in mathematics and general knowledge (general culture, maternal and child health, environmental protection, and agriculture), were analyzed using Z-scores.

- The results in the mathematics test were poor: 54 percent of students achieved a score below the weighted average (100). In general, and with respect to this average, the data do not indicate a relationship between the degree of community participation and students' results in mathematics. As Table 4 shows, the best results were achieved both in the schools with a low level of community participation and in schools with a high level of community participation (98.04 and 97.51 respectively), while the lower scores were recorded by schools with an average level of community participation (92.21). The link between community participation and student results in mathematics is probably limited by other factors. In this respect, analysis by type of school shows:

- The best results in mathematics are achieved (Table 4): (i) in the private and Muslim schools, when community participation is low; (ii) in the public schools, when participation is average; and (iii) in community schools and the literacy centers, when participation is high. It i only at the literacy centers and community schools that results improve along with increase participation. These are also the schools that respond most directly to the demand for education on the part of parents and students. Moreover, the best school results (see "average score") are achieved at the private schools and literacy centers. Lastly, community school students constitute a more homogenous group, with a standard deviation that is lower than that of the other groups.

Table 4: Results in mathematics, by school and by level of participation

	Type of school (weighted scores)					
Level of participation	**Public school**	**Private school**	**Commun. school**	**Muslim school**	**Literacy center**	**Average**
Low	87.18	106.20	-	103.00	95.81	98.04
Average	101.54	83.64	89.47	83.64	102.77	92.21
High	84.99	101.49	95.24	98.76	107.08	97.51
Average score	97.36	102.50	93.13	98.58	101.93	98.70
Standard deviation	14.1	16.0	9.8	16.20	15.1	

- The results in the general knowledge test are better than those in mathematics (Table 5): About half of students (49.8%) achieved a score equal to or higher than the weighted average. Moreover, the best results (see "average score") were achieved at the literacy centers. Here, too, the students at community schools constitute a more homogenous group, with a standard deviation that is lower than that of the other groups.

- School results are better when community participation is low (Muslim schools, private schools) or average (community schools, public schools, and literacy centers).

Table 5: Results in general knowledge test, by school and by level of participation

	Type of school (weighted scores)					
Level of participation	**Public school**	**Private school**	**Commun. school**	**Muslim school**	**Literacy center**	**Average**
Low	93.49	100.03	-	104.63	99.17	99.33
Average	100.91	97.70	101.49	90.10	100.83	98.20
High	87.07	-	97.07	97.47	99.87	95.37
Average score	97.49	99.40	98.54	99.12	100.28	98.90
Standard deviation	15.2	17.5	10.3	12.1	14.2	

Effects of participation on access

Access to education reflects schools' ability to provide for children of school age (mainly the population aged between 6 and 12). The usual access indicators are enrollment rates, which are generally calculated by region or village. However, for the purposes of this study, because of the difficulty of obtaining reliable data at the micro level (villages or communities), our research team used the enrollment rate, which reflects the ability of different types of schools in a region to provide for a proportion of children aged 6 to 12. Thus, the efforts of the community to increase the educational coverage provided were measured by: (i) the enrollment rate, according to the different types of school in the village; (ii) the enrollment rate, according to the levels of community participation in the management of basic education.

- The higher the level of community participation in the management of educational problems, the greater the access to education (Table 6): in communities with a high level of participation, 28 percent of school-age children have access to education. This proportion falls to 25 percent when the level of participation is average and 17 percent when it is low.

Table 6: Recruitment rate according to communities' level of participation

Indicators	Level of participation		
	Low	Average	High
Potential school population	10,911	1,172	4,300
Number at school	1,819	293	1,225
Recruitment rate	16.67%	25%	28.48%

- For the sample overall, the recruitment rate is 31 percent. The schools that absorb the highest proportions of the potential school population in their local community (Table 7) are the literacy centers (69%) and the Muslim schools (61%). Community schools, public schools, and private schools absorb only 39 percent, 31 percent, and 17 percent of the potential population respectively.

Table 7: Recruitment rate by type of local school

	Type of school					
Level of participation	Public school	Private school	Commun. school	Muslim school	Literacy center	Sample
Potential school population	8,413	6,126	1,103	1,735	100	17,490
Number at school	2,617	1,020	429	1,052	68	5,425
Recruitment rate	31.1%	16.6%	38.6%	60.6%	68.6%	31.0%

c. Other variables influencing quality and access

Using multiple regression analysis, it was possible to look at the effects of certain variables on access, as well as on the results achieved in mathematics and general knowledge. There were two considerations involved in constructing the regression models: (i) the elimination of variables that bear little or no relationship to the phenomena studied; and (ii) the selection of variables to be included in the regression equation, on the basis of the results of the correlation matrices, to avoid problems of multicolinearity. The treatment of qualitative variables to be included in the equation was performed by the "dummy coding" method. The regression equation was chosen with the "Enter" method, giving the list of variables.

Results in mathematics

The data give the following results:

Multiple R	0.5270	R Square	0.2777
Adjusted R Square	0.2166	Standard Error	13.5704
F =	4.5992	Signif F =	0.0000

- For our study, all variables in the equation explain 27.8 percent of the variations among students in mathematics. The variables most closely associated with the results (Table 8) are: (i) level of attendance at classes; (ii) rank of teacher; (iii) gender of student; (iv) visit by principal; (v) school offers model lessons; (vi) community participation; and (vii) type of school.

Table 8: Results of multiple-regression analysis (mathematics)

Variables	B	Mathematics p significant
Attendance at class	8.6022	0.0000
Teacher rank	-32.2456	0.0045
Gender of student	4.2868	0.0152
Visits by principal	-5.5592	0.0568
Model lessons	0.8300	0.0444
Community participation	-5.4118	0.0875
Type of school	9.4441	0.0411

- With regard to results in mathematics, the study shows that: (i) the greater the level of class attendance, the better the results in mathematics: students who attend regularly score 8 points higher than those who do not; (ii) students taught by a former pupil learn significantly less than those who are taught by teachers with a degree; (iii) boys achieve considerably better results in mathematics than girls, which tends to support earlier studies carried out in Côte d'Ivoire; (iv) visits by the principal have a negative correlation with students' results: the more frequent the visits made by the principal, the worse the results achieved by students; and (v) on the other hand, offering model lessons has a positive correlation with results achieved in mathematics: the more this type of lesson is offered, the better the results, and this can be seen at the private schools.

- Students who attend private schools achieve the best results in mathematics. This indicates that apart from the factor of community participation, the type of school is also an important variable in terms of acquiring knowledge at school. It should also be noted that: (i) although students who attend literacy centers do not have high attendance rates, they achieve the second-best results in mathematics (after those who attend private schools); and (ii) students who attend literacy centers are generally older than the average, and this variable also plays a role in the acquisition of knowledge.

Results in general knowledge test

The data give the following results:

Multiple R	0.4755	R Square	0.2261
Adjusted R Square	0.1438	Standard Error	13.6494
F =	2.7466	Signif F =	0.0002

- Within the context of our study, all variables in the equation explain 22.6 percent of the variation among the students in general knowledge. The variables most closely associated with the results (Table 9) are: (i) the number of reading books; (ii) the student's age; (iii) supervision at home; (iv) the student's place of residence; (v) homework; (vi) the type of school; and (vii) the rank of the teacher.

Table 9: Results of multiple regression analysis (general knowledge)

Variables	B	General knowledge p significant
Number of reading books	0.5398	0.0005
Age of student	0.4379	0.0216
Supervision at home	4.1781	0.0803
Place of residence	-21.5492	0.0000
Homework	19.3130	0.0072
Type of school	-14.0419	0.0248
Rank of teacher	14.1350	0.0340

- With regard to results achieved in the general knowledge test, our study shows that: (i) the students who have more reading books achieve the best scores: the availability and use of reading books is equivalent to a gain of 0.53 points; (ii) the older the students, the more successful they are: the age factor is worth a 0.43 point gain; (iii) the influence of supervision at home, although positive, appears to be weak; (iv) students from rural areas do better than those from urban areas; (v) students who are given homework do significantly better. This is also of considerable help to the teacher, and represents a gain of 19.31 points; (vi) students attending literacy centers do better than their counterparts in public schools; and (vii) contrary to the results in mathematics, those in general knowledge are markedly better when the teacher is a literacy-center graduate than they are when the teacher has a degree.

Results in terms of access

Three factors were used to explain student access to school (Table 10): (i) the number of girls sent to school; (ii) the school's immediate environment; and (iii) community participation. These three factors account for 26 percent of the variation in access to schools.

The study shows that with regard to access: (i) an increase in the number of girls sent to school is reflected in a significant increase in the rate of access; (ii) urban areas are characterized by a rate of access that is low in comparison to that of rural areas; and (iii) contrary to all expectations, whenever community participation is strong, it does not have a significant impact on access rates.

Table 10: Factors explaining school access

Variables	B	p significant
Number of girls sent to school	0.44	*
Urban area	-0.79	*
Community participation	0.40	ns
Portion of variance explained	26%	

*: significant to 10%   ns: not significant

6. *Analysis of results*

Our study defined the level of participation by the score obtained in three participation scales, whose weighting accorded a differential value to financial and material participation (coefficient 1), participation in educational supervision (coefficient 2) and participation in decision-making (coefficient 3). This approach, which overvalues decision-making in relation to material or financial contributions, constitutes a limit to our interpretation of the results achieved. With equal weighting, these different forms of participation would have systematically increased the community's level of participation in educational development. In fact, the study may underestimate the effective level of community involvement. In analyzing the effect of participation on access, one should not lose sight of the fact that, in the present situation in Mali, parents' refusal to contribute toward the construction/renovation/maintenance of school infrastructures or toward payment of teachers' wages has a direct, if not dramatic impact on school services. Similarly, by opting for a private school, the parents commit themselves to making a significant financial contribution toward education.

On the other hand, to attempt to show the extent to which community participation improves the quality of education is a considerable challenge, since the quality of education is largely defined and measured by students' results in the mathematics and general knowledge tests. Essentially, learning occurs within the educational relationship established between the student and the teacher. The community can participate only indirectly in this relationship, by helping to respond to the needs of teachers and/or students, which prevents it from establishing a more meaningful educational relationship. Our study did not take this sort of systemic approach, which sees the quality of education as the result of interactions between the various actors involved.

Finally, study data indicate that the elements of community participation, schools, or participants might have certain characteristics that may be qualified by, or whose importance may be underlined by, certain factors.

- The study noted that in almost 80 percent of schools surveyed, communities do not participate in the purchase of school textbooks. This is partly explained by the school textbook distribution policy applied under the Basic Education Development Project. One might look at the role played by the community in purchasing this type of teaching material, and one might also question whether, from a long-term perspective, a case might exist for insisting on formulating and implementing a book policy.

- Attendance rates are lower at literacy centers, and these facilities also have the oldest students. One must bear in mind, in this context, that adults attend these schools, their occupations are more important than those of children, that their level of motivation is different, and that the course contents are best suited to their needs. Thus, it is not surprising that these schools also produce some of the best test scores.

- Community schools and literacy centers attract the highest proportion of students attending educational facilities where participation is high. This is not surprising since these schools are created by the communities, or are set up in response to community demand. In fact, these schools are excellent vehicles for practicing the sort of effective community participation desired by this study. The promotion of community schools, particularly, is extremely important to the Malian education system, and the government does encourage the creation of such schools, due to its limited resources.

- The vast majority of the teachers included in the sample are men. Moreover, the enrollment rate among girls is markedly below that among boys. A possible link between these two phenomena seems clear. Since increasing access in Mali must include an increase in the enrollment rate among girls, the debate about participation ought to be broadened to include the issue of women's involvement in the life of the school.

- In general, the study indicates that the level of community participation is average or low in the public schools. This might partly be explained by the fact that equipment and teacher training needs are less important in this type of school, since they are government funded, while at other types of facilities these needs are most often met either by the school owners or through direct contributions from students' parents. Moreover, these results suggest that a link may exist between the form of community participation and the qualifications of the teaching staff. In fact, they may suggest that the more qualified the teaching staff, the less important the role of community participation is in making decisions related to the management of the educational process. This does not imply that it must be less important in another area of education (funding or staff management).

- The results also show that the best test results are achieved when the level of participation is average or low. One might also put forward the hypothesis that the better the teaching relationship, the less the community needs to participate in the teaching process. A higher level of community participation might, on the other hand, indicate that a problem exists and that the solution requires mobilizing the energies of a whole range of actors. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, a reduction in certain forms of participation might thus indicate a higher quality level of education. Nonetheless, it may still be that the issue of enrollment is not sufficiently understood by communities and that greater effort should be made to raise their awareness in this regard. All those involved should be made aware of the problems involved and kept up to date with developments resulting from the remedial measures undertaken to address them. Once the problem is corrected, one can assess the resources and means that must be mobilized to maintain a satisfactory situation. Communities will be more receptive to long-term solutions if they are well-informed—that is, if the information has been adequately disseminated, in forms that are accessible to the communities.

- The relationship between teachers' length of service in the different types of school and the average results achieved in mathematics and general knowledge by the students at literacy centers suggest that teachers' experience has a greater positive effect on results than their level of qualification. Although the level of teachers' wages may be higher in formal schools than in other types of schools, which attracts better teachers, the results of the community schools—whose teachers are less well-trained and less experienced—are among the best with respect to the general knowledge test. Based on these results and the strongly participatory nature of this type of school, it is possible to take a different, less expensive approach, involving the retraining of teachers within the framework of professional development. This approach, founded on a participatory dynamic encouraging teachers' direct involvement in their own training, focuses on the problems encountered in the classroom. Given that our study suggests a positive relationship between the model lessons and students' results, professional development might be articulated around model lessons, which, if they are developed within an educational team, can strengthen the participation of teachers in developing quality teaching. This approach might make it possible to open up the participation debate further.

7. *Conclusions and recommendations*

a. Verification of hypotheses

Our study sought to verify the two following hypotheses: (i) the higher the level of community participation, the higher the quality of basic education; and (ii) the higher the level of community participation, the stronger the access to education. These hypotheses were not verified to any significant degree. Instead, the study produced qualified responses with respect to the effect of participation on access and quality, particularly in terms of the types of school concerned, their orientations, and their history. If a high level of participation may be correlated with increased access, it is at community schools and literacy centers that this effect is felt. As for results, only at literacy centers can a high level of participation be correlated with better schooling.

To a certain degree, our study also provides answers to two major questions: (i) under Mali's ten-year education program, the government sees the creation of community schools as a priority; should the government pursue its policy of promoting such schools, in view of the results of our study? and (ii) does community participation, as envisaged in the research hypotheses, have a viable role to play in improving access to and quality of education?

With regard to the first question, the answer is "yes." The government must pursue the promotion of community schools. Our study has shown that most parents believe that participation is a voluntary process. That means that the government still has an important asset in terms of mobilizing resources for education. Furthermore, traditional schools have little influence on access to education. It is essentially the Muslim schools located in urban areas, the community schools, and the literacy centers, especially those located in rural areas, that have driven the increase in enrollment rates. With respect to the quality of teaching, community schools have shown an ability to produce strong results in general knowledge. By creating closer links between literacy centers, which produce good results in mathematics, and community schools, it should be possible to improve results at these schools, especially if this approach is combined with a process of in-service teacher training, within the context of teachers' professional development.

The answer to the second question, however, is "no." If participation is to be viable, the debate about participation must be broadened. Participation is an interactive process between different actors, and should result in improved access and quality. For example, in order to improve access, a major effort must be made to provide schooling for girls. Women are not prominent among the teaching staff, but are they any more prominent among the parent associations? What image is the education system conveying to female students? In order to make the reforms and the new responsibilities transferred to the communities more acceptable, parents must be informed, whether through their APEs/management committees or through broader structures involving a larger number of actors from the education sector. The results of our study show that the APEs/management committees are not entirely effective in mobilizing communities around the school. Moreover, teachers do not often meet with parents, and teachers themselves receive little supervision with respect to their own duties. The dynamic that emerges in the light of these observations is not one of mobilization and involvement, but rather one of isolation and mistrust.

In conclusion, one might conclude that participation has a fundamental effect on the quality of access. The present dynamic among the actors encourages illiteracy, and weak internal and external returns. Any debate concerning participation must seek to change this overall dynamic among the various actors involved—not only the parents and the community, but also the school community as a whole.

b. Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to broaden the debate on participation to include all the actors involved in the education sector, and to open the debate to issues relating to improving access to and the quality of education, within a context of decentralization. The recommendations thus provide a basis for a structured forum for debate, which will enable all actors involved to combine their efforts in an effective manner, to reform Mali's schools.

- Develop a communications policy between school authorities and communities, with a view to creating a functional mechanism for encouraging demand and development in basic education.

- Develop a communications policy between teachers (trainers) and parents, to improve the supervision of students outside school.

- Improve supervision of teachers by school principals and inspectors.

- Encourage the professional development of teachers by strengthening and motivating educational teams and by creating "quality networks," especially among community schools and literacy centers located in rural areas.

- Train members of APEs/management committees and restructure these institutions, to make them both more representative of communities, and more functional, especially in areas of financial management, school planning, and social responsibility with respect to girls' education.
- Ensure greater participation on the part of NGOs in supervising and mobilizing communities.
- Do more to ensure that successful examples of community participation are publicized throughout the country (among other communities).

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Chapter 8

Togo

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1. *Context of the study*

Togo's education system is in a profound state of crisis, due to a disastrous situation created by educational reforms now thought to have been too ambitious. The country's gross school attendance rate has now stagnated at around 61 percent (DGPE, 1993-1994). The objectives of the 1975 educational reforms with respect to the democratization of education have not been achieved, especially with respect to the expansion of basic education (MEN, 1975). A strong desire to redefine educational objectives and methods was expressed by the main actors in the education system during the 1991-1992 democratic transition period. That desire for change was sanctioned by the general policy declaration of 1991 (Deliry-Antheaume, 1995). However, the context is very unfavorable, marked by a lack of material resources and by the gradual reduction in state financing since the implementation of the country's Structural Adjustment Programs.

In this context, the government has not honored its commitments with respect to national education. As a result, the people have, to a certain degree, lost interest in schools, which do not meet their expectations in terms of providing opportunities in the labor market (Deliry-Antheaume, 1995). The main weaknesses of the education system are the lack of qualified teachers, the lack of equipment, and the education system's lack of social relevance (that is, the failure to integrate social values into teaching programs).

The question of sustainable development within the education sector in Togo is a concern shared by all actors involved (ERNWACA/Togo, 1995). The essential elements for sustainable development in education include: the quality of education; the financial, material, social, and educational participation of families, local communities, and the government; adequate school equipment; the quality of human resources; and successful students. Despite several studies on one or another of these elements (Togis 1991a, 1994; SOTED/EREDU, 1991; Gbikpi-Benissan, 1991; Dongne and Dravie, 1991), no systematic study has been carried out to analyze the effects of community participation on students' skills—one of the main indicators of the quality of education and the attainment of the country's objectives in this regard (SOTED/EREDU, 1991). The few available studies about Togo have tended rather to focus on the reasons why children either do not attend school or drop out of school at the primary school level (Diambomba, 1990), on teachers' living conditions (Togis, 1991b), or on the costs and funding of formal education (Dougna and Dravie, 1991; Mingat, Jarousse, and Ripian, 1978). The contribution made by families, individuals, and communities has been evaluated in a somewhat superficial manner, particularly its financial aspects (Togis, 1994), and fails to establish links with student performance.

The researchers of ERNWACA/Togo saw their task as part of the essential search for alternative ways to improve education funding, notably through the statutory participation of communities. In general terms, the study aims to identify and evaluate the effects of community participation on the quality of education under three main headings: funding, social participation, and participation in the educational process, as well as the links between community participation and school "products" (namely, students' skills and performance).

2. *Questions / study objective*

In order to obtain the information needed to verify our hypotheses, we devised three research questions:

- In what form and in what areas does the community participate in education, with respect to funding, curricula, skills development?
- What is the impact of community participation on the quality of education, in terms of knowledge, values, and skills?
- How does the community perceive its contribution toward the quality of education?

In attempting to answer these questions, the study seeks to validate the following hypotheses:

- Financial participation influences the development of students' skills.
- Parents' social participation has a positive influence on the development of students' skills.
- The curriculum influences students' skills.
- There is a relationship between (a) perceptions of participation by students' parents and (b) students' aspirations and skills.

3. *Methodology*

a. Definition of concepts and variables

The community

The community is defined as a group whose members are in contact with each other, who share the same interests and the same aspirations, and who are linked by common values and objectives. The community may be geographical, territorial, socio-economic, or professional in nature, and can be of modest dimensions, as with a district, or as large as an entire region.

For the purposes of this study, community refers to the different social groups that may be involved in the life of a given school, whether students, students' parents, students' parents associations, school principals, or teachers. The main characteristics of respondents interviewed for the purposes of our study are:

- father/tutor: age, number of children enrolled in the school, socio-professional category, member or non-member of parent committee;
- student: age, gender, number of years in the primary cycle, person with whom student lives;
- teacher: level of education, years of experience as a teacher;
- school principal: number of years as principal.

Our study added two school-related characteristics to this list—namely, the type of school and nature of the school's surrounding environment.

Community participation

The concept of community participation used for the purposes of this study was taken from the report of the 1978 WHO/UNICEF Conference:

> Community participation is a process in which individuals and families...develop their ability to contribute toward their own development and to that of their community. They thus achieve a better understanding of their own situation and are motivated by a desire to resolve their common problems. This enables them to be the agents of their own development, rather than confining themselves to the role of passive beneficiaries of development aid. This requires that they not feel obliged to apply traditional solutions when such solutions are inappropriate, and realize instead that they are free to be innovative in their search for appropriate solutions.

This definition opposes centralization and participation with regard to decision-making, training, implementation, management, and control of education. It emphasizes participation by members of the general population (especially parents and families); communities' autonomy in their search for solutions to their problems; their freedom to find new solutions, in accordance with the needs or values of the community; and the importance of their involvement in the institutional management of education.

Our study looked at three areas of community participation:

- Financial participation: this type of funding refers to the contribution made by students' parents/tutors, on an individual basis: enrollment or tuition fees, daily allowance given to the child each morning, informal contributions toward the construction or repair of school buildings and the construction of desks and chairs, the provision of school textbooks and supplies to children, as well as students' tutoring.
- Social participation, which concerns the contribution of parents:
  - first to teachers, in the form of recruitment of students, recruitment of teachers, and coverage of food and wage costs;
  - second, to needy children in their district, in the form of food, lodging, clothing, school supplies, allowance, medical care, and others.
- Participation in the educational process, understood as the contribution made by parents to all material, technical, and organizational resources contributing toward the success of learning experiences, namely:
  - material participation: construction of apatams, repair and cleaning of school facilities;
  - administrative participation: management of school funds, management of school social-security funds, submission of grievances;
  - educational and technical participation: advice to teachers, advice to students, providing information on village history, parents' meetings, curriculum design, settling conflicts among teachers, settling conflicts between parents and teachers.

The study also addressed the perceptions of two types of actors:

- the perception of principals and teachers with regard to the participation of parents in the life of the school and the management of the financial participation and funds contributed by parents;
- parents' perception and understanding of the assistance they give to their children, and whether or not they wish to increase their participation in the life of the school.

Quality of education

For the purpose of this study, quality of education was addressed in terms of curriculum, skills, and values. These terms are defined below:

The **curriculum** is defined as an integrated collection of objectives, contents, educational methods, teaching resources, ways of organizing the learning environment, and evaluation techniques. Two specific aspects of the curriculum have been studied: the relevance of school textbooks and social values, as reflected in student behavior.

Our study defined **skills** in terms of knowledge and aptitude to be acquired during the learning process. Whereas knowledge refers to pure learning—that is, to knowledge acquired at school, aptitude refers to practical aspects—that is, the aptitude or ability to apply theoretical knowledge. In this sense, developing students' skills consists of making the link between educational contents and the outside world, giving theoretical knowledge a practical dimension by applying it, and equipping students with the intellectual, emotional, and sensory and motor abilities that are essential to adult life. Thus, the approach adopted for this study represents a break from a tradition that focuses exclusively on the theoretical content of the knowledge conveyed by the educational process, which is mainly concerned with students' performance in national examinations.

More specifically, students' skills were measured according to their degree of knowledge and aptitude in four disciplines: French, arithmetic, natural sciences, and history/geography.

Values

Sociocultural values characteristic of local communities in Togo coexist with "Western" values in the schools. Some of these values, which are connected to an "ideal type," in the Weberian sense, define the type of person to be trained and help decision makers to define the purposes and objectives of curricula, and to implement them. For the purpose of this study, our researchers investigated and analyzed the community values reflected in the curriculum, and then measured their impact on the quality of education.

The ERNWACA study focused mainly on values that relate to a model of "family life" connected to a new teaching method or to a traditional teaching method. The model of family life based on a new teaching method mainly included the following values: the spirit of initiative, cooperation, and mutual assistance; intrinsic motivation; independence achieved through practical work and the ability to pursue further education. The model of family life based on traditional education mainly included the following values: conformism, fatalism, extrinsic motivation; rigid, autocratic and hierarchical relationships; and communications between adults and children.

b. Analytical model

The different independent variables were constructed and measured according to the following indicators:

- **the community:** (i) characteristics of schools; and (ii) characteristics of respondents;
- **community participation:** (i) financial participation, (ii) social participation; (iii) participation in the educational process; and (iv) perceptions of parents' participation;
- **values**, based on two elements of the curriculum: the relevance of textbooks and societal values, as reflected in student behavior.

Table 1: Summary of study variables

Independent variables			Dependent variables
Community	**Participation**	**Values**	**Quality of education**
Schools	Financial	Curriculum	Quantity and quality of resources
Students	Social	Behavior	Knowledge
Parents/Tutors	Educational process		Skills
Teachers Principals	Perceptions		

The dependent variable **quality of education** was measured according to the following indicators:

- the quantity and quality of the human, material, technical, and financial resources available to the education system;
- the relationship between societal values reflected in students' conduct after the programs have been implemented, and the purposes set out under education laws;
- the relationship between the skills effectively acquired by students as a result of the educational programs and the goals set out under education laws.

With specific regard to the development of skills, our study attempted to measure the performance of students in relation to two types of training:

- academic training: that is, the learning of academic knowledge aimed at ensuring the student's success in school examinations. This type of training is measured on the basis of student test essays taken in the first two terms of sixth grade, on the one hand, and the knowledge tests given at the end of the school year;
- "integral" training, which refers both to acquired academic knowledge and to skills developed in parallel to (and derived from) theoretical lessons, and which the student can apply in his or her daily life. These skills are evaluated on the basis of tests given at the end of the year to the students included in the sample.

Lastly, in order to measure the **effects of community participation on the quality of education**, our analysis of the results took two different forms:

- analysis of the correlation between school performance and the independent variables— first, those related to the individual characteristics of students and parents, and second, those related to community participation;
- multiple regression analysis, aimed at measuring the role of independent variables in the following three dependent variables: (i) the performance of sixth grade students in the exami-

nations taken in the first two terms of the school year 1994-95; (ii) the performance of sixth grade students in the test given by the researchers on the knowledge acquired at the end of the school year 1994-95; and (iii) the performance of sixth grade students in the test of skills acquired at the end of the year, administered by the researchers. Our analysis of the results concerned all student respondents, and student respondents by region and by gender. The significance threshold "p" was set at 0.05.

c. The sample

A field survey was conducted June 6-30, 1995, in three economic regions selected from among Togo's five regions, according to regional enrollment rates: the Maritime region, where the enrollment rate is highest (76.3%); the Central region, where the average rate (68.8%) is close to the national average (61%); and the Savannah region, which has the lowest rate (34.8%) (DGPE, 1993-1994). In each of these regions, three prefectures were chosen: Zio, Gulf, and Vo in the Maritime region; Sotoubqua, Tchaoudjo, and Tchamba in the Central region; Oti, Tandjoaré, and Kpendjal in the Savannah region. The goal was to ensure that the survey was representative of the country as a whole.

In all, 50 schools were included in the survey (see Table 2): seven in the Savannah region, nine in the Central region, and 34 in the Maritime region. The number of schools included for each region was determined proportionately, by relating the number of schools to the total student body of schools in the region. The schools in each of nine prefectures were chosen at random from an exhaustive list of the schools in each prefecture, and through a proportional allocation of rural and urban sectors and teaching categories.

Table 2: Distribution of students included in the sample, by region, prefecture, school, and school type

Regions	No. of students	%	No. of school per reg.	Enrollment rate	Prefec.	No. of students	%	No. of school per pref.	School types[1]				
									Up	Rp	Ur	Rr	Us
Maritime	510	68.1%	34	76.3%	Golfe	315	42%	21	8	3	4	2	1
					Zio	120	16%	8	1	5	1	1	-
					Vo	75	10%	5	1	2	-	1	2
Central	135	18.0%	9	68.8%	Sotouboa	45	6%	3	1	1	-	1	-
					Tchaoudjo	60	8%	4	1	2	-	-	1
					Tchamba	30	4%	2	1	1	-	-	-

Table 2 (continued)

Regions	No. of students	%	No. of school per reg.	Enrollment rate	Prefec.	No. of students	%	No. of school per pref.	School types(1)				
									Up	Rp	Ur	Rr	Us
Savannah	104	13.9%	7	34.8%	Oti	45	6%	3	1	2	-	-	1
					Tandjoaré	30	4%	2	1	-	-	1	-
					Kpendjal	29	3.9%	2	1	1	-	-	1
Total	**749**	**100%**	**50**	**59.9%**		**749**	**100%**	**50**	**16**	**17**	**5**	**6**	**6**

(1) Types of schools: Up = urban public, Rp = rural public, Ur = urban religious (private), Rr = rural religious (private), Us = urban secular (private).

The representation of urban schools is slightly higher than that of rural schools, because of the high number of schools in Togo's capital city. The same is true of public schools, which are more numerous (33) than private schools (17). In this sense, the sample is representative of the country as a whole.

The sample comprised 749 students in sixth grade, 735 parents, and 50 teachers (see Table 3). Most students (79.8%) were between 13 and 25 years old, while 20.2 percent were of the standard age for sixth grade (9-12). Nearly 60 percent spent between 7 and 11 years in the primary cycles, while 41.1 percent went through their primary cycle years without failing.

The parents were generally in an older group (75% were over 40 years old), had a large family (nearly 60% had 4 or more children at the school), and generally belonged to a lower-income socio-professional category (nearly 60% were artisans, traders, or farmers, while 41% were government employees/wage workers, or self-employed).

Table 3: Profile of the student and parent samples

Sample	No. of students	%
Students in 6th grade - characteristics		
Age		
9 to 12	151	20.2%
13 to 15	352	47.0%
16 to 25	222	29.6%
Unknown	24	3.2%
Total	749	100.0%
Gender		
Female	267	35.6%
Male	471	62.9%
Unknown	11	1.5%
Total	749	100.0%

Table 3 (continued)

Sample	No. of students	%
Years spent in the primary cycle		
5-6	308	41.1%
7-8	363	48.5%
9 or +	78	10.4%
Total	749	100.0%
Child's current tutor		
Both parents	392	52.6%
Grandparents, uncle, aunt	90	12.1%
Father only	120	16.1%
Mother only	126	16.8%
Stepmother	7	0.9%
Parents' friends	11	1.5%
Total	749	100.0%
Parents - characteristics		
Age of father		
Younger than 30	43	5.9%
30 to 40	175	23.8%
40 to 50	246	33.5%
50 or older	220	29.9%
Unknown	51	6.9%
Total	735	100.00%
Number of children at the school		
1 to 3	291	41.2%
4 to 6	285	40.3%
7 and +	119	16.8%
Unknown	12	1.7%
Total	735	100.0%
Socio-professional category (father)		
State employee or wage worker	247	33.6%
Trader	59	8.0%
Artisan	68	9.3%
Farmer	190	25.8%
Self-employed	46	6.3%
Other	125	17.0%
Total	735	100.0%

Of the 50 sixth grade teachers included in the sample, 71 percent had more than 10 years of experience in education. Overall, they were sufficiently educated and trained to work in education: 92 percent had earned either the BEPC (an examination generally taken at the age of 16) or a baccelauriat (High School Diploma).

d. Data collection and processing

The data collection process took 24 days, and was notable for: (i) the variety of data collection tools: questionnaires, tests, and individual interview guides; (ii) the methods used to administer the tools: individual and/or collective; (iii) the collection method: survey via questionnaire, knowledge test, and interview; (iv) the various types of analysis: frequency analysis for all variables, correlation and multiple regression analysis concerning the dependent variable and the independent variables; and (v) the system used to control the quality of information gathered: pretest, analysis of pre-test data, review of questionnaires and implementation strategies, and survey report.

Four tools were designed, validated, and finalized by researchers: the student questionnaire, the parent questionnaire, the student tests (skills, knowledge, and values), and an individual interview guide for the survey of teachers and principals.

The questionnaires and tests (knowledge, values, and skills) were designed for students, while the survey of students' parents used two tools (questionnaire and structured interviews), and the survey of principals, and teachers used one only (individual interviews). The pre-test of the different types of survey tools was conducted by the interviewers May 22-26, 1995, as part of their training. The interview sample comprised 30 students in sixth grade (15 per school), 30 parents, 2 school principals and 2 teachers in sixth grade, from two schools—one urban and the other rural, located in the principal town of the Prefecture of Danyi (Plateau Region). The pre-test made it possible to estimate how much time would be required for the whole survey and to make any changes needed to ensure more effective implementation of the survey tools during implementation of the actual survey.

The knowledge, skill, and values tests were designed to assess the "quality" variable of our study. They comprised a range of standardized tests formulated by evaluation specialists based on the level attained by students during implementation of the school mathematics, French, history/geography, and natural sciences curricula.

Data-processing was performed in three stages: a) codification of data, that is, the transformation of information into encoded data that could be analyzed by computer; b) data-entry, or the entering of the data into the computer; and c) clean-up, or the process of comparing the data entered into computer against the raw data, in order to correct any data-entry errors. After verification of data quality, frequency statistics (number of students, percentages, averages and standard deviations for certain variables) were used to describe respondents' profiles. We then used Pearson's correlation analysis to determine the relationships between series of two variables and to limit the number of independent variables that might be integrated within the multiple regression analysis model. Thus, when the correlation between two independent variables was high (R higher than, or equal to 0.60), only one of them was included in the regression analysis, in order to prevent multicolinearity. The correlation between two variables is considered statistically significant when p is lower than, or equal to 0.05, which is the threshold generally used and accepted by social scientists. Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relative weight of each of the selected independent variables in the variation of dependent variables. Our research was limited to the essential results, employing a significance threshold of 0.05. The software used for the data-processing phase was *EPI/INFO* for data-entry processes and *SPSS/PC+* for the statistical processing phase.

From a methodological standpoint, multiple regression analysis yielded the coefficient of determination (R^2) as a means of assessing the role played by each independent variable in the variation of each dependent variable. However, due to the computer technician's incomplete mastery of data checking techniques, we are unable to explain the dashes in the results (cf. whether the student is a boy or a girl in Tables 12 and 13).

With regard to fieldwork, the following difficulties emerged: a) the reticence of certain school principals to participate in the survey, because they were weary of contributing to surveys whose results they never see; b) the difficulties of moving around by bush-taxi during the rainy season led to a number of delays and technical problems; c) the reluctance of certain parents in rural areas to accept the invitation extended to them by school principals to participate in the survey; and d) in terms of funding, the national coordination office had to come up with some ingenious logistical strategies to begin the survey on the day when sixth grade students included in the sample began their end-of-primary-school examinations (June 20, 1995).

4. *Results*

a. Description of variables (frequency analysis)

Forms of community participation

Financial participation

- More than 80 percent of parents pay public school fees for their own child—ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 CFA francs per annum, depending on the region. This is quite a low fee level, and is due to the fact that most students in the sample attend public schools. They must purchase supplies and school textbooks and pay informal fees (for the construction of desks and chairs and school buildings) of less than 5,000 CFA. Two-thirds of parents (66.2%) estimate that total annual expenditure for their children's schooling is between 10,000 and 90,000 CFA francs, while some 33.8 percent say the amount is less than 10,000 CFA francs. Parents who are better-off enroll their children in private (secular) schools, which are almost all located in towns, and where school fees range from 8,000 to 95,000 CFA francs.

- Only 62 percent of students own all the basic work supplies (pen, pencil, ruler, eraser, and exercise book), 26 percent own between one and three of those items, and 2 percent own none at all. With regard to mathematics supplies (pair of compasses, set square, protractor, two-decimeter ruler), 50 percent of students own all the basic supplies and 22 percent own none. The average number of school textbooks (books for reading, science, arithmetic, history, and geography) owned by students is very low (1.7 books per 5 children). More than one-fifth of children have no book. Only 25.9 percent of students benefit from home tutoring.

Table 4: Parents' financial participation[1]

Financial participation	No. of parents	%	No. of students	%	Total parental expenditure/year[2]	
					No.	%
School fees (in CFA francs)						
less than 1,000	212	30.8			39	5.8
1,000 to 5,000	368	53.5			187	28.0
5,000 to 10,000	50	7.3			334	50.0
10,000 to 25,000	12	1.7			54	8.1
25,000 to 40,000	36	5.2			54	8.1
40,000 to 65 000	10	1.5				
Total	688	100.0			668	
Allowance (in CFA francs)						
Less than 25	87	14.3				
25 to 50	432	71.2				
55 to 100	49	8.1				
105	39	6.4				
Total	607					
Other fees (in CFA francs)						
25 to 1,000	114	45.6				
1,000 to 5,000	116	46.4				
5,000 to 10,000	20	8.0				
Total	250					
Home tutoring			194	25.9		
Quantity of supplies owned by student						
Basic supplies (pen, pencil, eraser, ruler)						
0 supplies			14	1.9		
1			21	2.8		
2			50	6.7		
3			195	26.0		
4			469	62.6		
Mathematics supplies (set square, compasses, etc.)						
0 supplies			166	22.2		
1			73	9.7		
2			62	8.3		
3			73	9.7		
4			375	50.1		
School textbooks (reading, arithmetic, science, etc.)						
0 textbooks			159	21.2		
1			213	28.4		
2			199	26.6		
3			65	8.7		
4			44	5.9		
5			69	9.2		

[1] Distribution of data was related to either parents or students. The data used concern only those respondents who effectively participated (those who replied "yes").

[2] Total annual expenditure excluding school supplies.

Social participation

- Nearly half of parents surveyed participate by providing various kinds of assistance to needy students living in their local district, mainly (in descending order of importance) through the purchase of school supplies, food, medical care, allowance, clothing, and lodging. They participate to a lesser extent (around 24 percent on average) in the form of assistance to teachers —particularly (in descending order of importance) in terms of student recruitment, teacher recruitment, and covering the costs of wages, food, and, lastly, lodging.

Table 5: Parents' social participation(1)

Social participation	No. of parents	%
Help with:		
Student recruitment	215	29.3
Teacher recruitment	191	26.0
Children's food	147	20.0
Teachers' accommodation	134	8.2
Teachers' wages	189	25.7
Help for needy students:		
Food	321	43.7
Accommodation	258	35.1
Clothing	296	40.3
School supplies	323	43.9
Allowance	310	42.2
Medical care	316	43.0
Others	78	10.6

(1) See notes to Table 4.

Participation in the educational process

- Many parents contribute toward the various activities linked to school life. Most parents say they have participated in the construction of apatams, or in repair or cleaning work.

Table 6: Parents' participation in the education process(1)

Participation in the educational process	No. of parents	%
Material participation		
Construction of apatams	452	61.5
Repairs	428	58.2
Cleaning	371	50.5
Participation in administration		
Submission of grievances	297	40.4
Management of school funds	203	27.6
Management of school insurance fund	208	28.3
Educational and technical assistance		
Advice to teachers	270	36.7
Formulation of programs	213	29.0
Resolving conflicts between teachers	258	35.1
Resolving parent-teacher conflicts	345	46.9
Requests to hire certain teachers	114	15.5
Advice to students	500	68.0
Information about village history	332	45.2
Parents' meetings	607	82.6

(1) See notes to Table 4.

- On average, nearly 50 percent of parents say they have participated in the educational process of their school in different ways: parent meetings (82.6%), advice to students (68%), settlement of conflicts between parents and teachers (46.9%), providing information on village history (45.2%), submission of grievances (40.4%), and, in at least 30 percent of cases, use of school funds. They contribute less toward the management of funds or to those forms of participation that are related to teachers' careers.

Perceptions of community participation by the various actors

Parents' views of their own participation

- Parents/tutors believe that the assistance given to their child in the area of schooling is very significant (63.5%) or significant (22.1%). However, slightly over 14 percent believe that this assistance is not very significant or not at all significant.

- However, a very large proportion of parents (85.9%) would like to participate more in the life of the school, while only 14.1 percent believe that they could not participate more in school activities.

- Furthermore, 23 percent of parents believe that various community partners ought to be made more aware of the need to increase community participation, and 33.2 percent of parents would recommend that central and local authorities increase their contribution to the school.

Teachers' views of parents' participation

- Unlike parents themselves, teaching staff believe that parents' contributions are insufficient. This is the view held by 53 percent of school principals surveyed and 83 percent of teachers. Furthermore, 80 percent of teachers say they are dissatisfied with their wages, their lodging, their teaching equipment, and their training.

Results in end-of-term examinations and tests administered by researchers

Results of test essays for first two terms

- On a scale of 0 to 10 (with 5 being the pass, or average grade), the results indicate that 73.6 percent of students passed the examination in the first term, but that this percentage fell significantly in the second term (61%). The general level of students included in the survey was average in the first term (55.3% earned 5-6 points), with a percentage of strong students (between 7 and 10 points) of 13.5 percent. The average group fell below the 50 percent mark in the second term, as did the number of strong students, which fell to 7.5 percent.

Knowledge tests results

- The knowledge tests administered to students in the three regions addressed all the subjects included in the school program (spelling, mathematics, natural sciences, history/geography), with a view to determining how far the students had mastered the knowledge they had been taught. The scoring went from 0 to 10 and included three categories of skills: weak (0 to 4), average (5 to 6), and strong (7 to 10).

- In spelling, 84.1 percent of students scored in the weak category, 9.9 percent in the average category, and 6.9 percent in the strong category.

- In mathematics, nearly half of students (46.8%) had not mastered the concepts taught. Weak students made up 66.7 percent of the total, with the average and strong students together accounting for 33.4 percent.

Skill tests results

- Results of the skill tests show that in every subject, students are incapable of applying the knowledge learned in school to their daily lives. For example, in spelling, students were asked to correct spelling mistakes in a text about community life in a Togo village. Nearly 80 percent of students fell into the "weak" category (0-4 points), being unable to correct the mistakes. (Only 14.4% managed to correct 3/4 of the mistakes.)

- In mathematics, only 36.2 percent of students were able to adapt their knowledge to the realities of daily life. Students were asked to solve a simple equation related to the purchase of common consumer goods by a Togo worker.

- In science education and life skills, the results were better. Sixty percent of students were able to identify Togo's common nutritional diseases and disease-bearing insects.

- In history/geography, there was a significant discrepancy between the scores achieved in the knowledge test and those achieved in the skill test. Whereas 71.2 percent were able to answer general history/geography questions, only 0.8 percent passed the skill test, which, in the case of the history component, required candidates to describe the way of life in Togo before colonization and to identify how colonization had changed that way of life. For the geography component, students were asked to write an essay explaining the process of erosion and offering pertinent advice to farmers in their neighborhood.

- Parents' perceptions confirmed the results achieved in the skill tests. Only 12.9 percent of parents say that their children write at home; 15.9 percent say that they make commonly used objects (baskets, pots, bags...); 18.4 percent say that they practice the elementary rules of good conduct (public-spiritedness, morals); only 9.3 percent of parents say that their children apply modern agricultural techniques, while 5.7 percent say that their children practice hygiene in their daily lives.

Results for values tests

The study demonstrated that teachers who cared a great deal about the success of their students in the CEP examination spent many extra hours helping them revise or correct their work or helping them to catch up. They were aware that their students tended mainly to develop automatic learning methods by memorizing concepts essential to school success. This approach illustrates the current focus of the country's educational system, which is reflected in the fact that a school's merits are judged according to the overall percentage success rate in the CEP exam and not according to the external effectiveness of education. Thus, 77 percent of teachers who say that they have shown personal initiative are content to: (i) adapt the focus of their lessons to the seasons of the year; and (ii) reorganize their timetables to give priority to core subjects and to exercises focusing on the transfer of knowledge. Teachers who doubt the relevance of regulations implemented denounce the heavy-handed approach of their principals, the conformist philosophy of their schools, and the almost nonexistent role of primary-cycle inspectors.

Ideally, students in the final years of primary school should develop a spirit of initiative, cooperation, and mutual assistance. They should be prepared to enter active life if necessary, by applying the knowledge and skills learned in school. If they pursue their studies, they should have a solid base on which to build. Our study showed that 72.5 percent of students are able to express their need to develop a spirit of initiative. They said that they would like to be taught how to raise small ruminants and how to perform their own domestic repairs, and to be instructed in folklore and cultural activities. However, they were faced with a lack of opportunities, they said, because teachers' initiatives were all limited to the teaching of classes, which was often handicapped by the conformist approach of the principal, by a lack of cooperation between the various actors in the schools, and by the rigid school discipline. Moreover, 69.3 percent of students say that they accepted and abided by all school rules, without question. Manual work represents 0.5 percent of class-work, and traditional education represents only 0.7 percent. As a result, little energy is devoted to students' wholistic development. Almost 14 percent of students no longer consider that education provides a way to succeed in life. Consequently, in the eyes of students, school teachers are losing their merit and their value.

b. Effects of participation on the quality of education: correlation analysis

Our correlation analysis sought to reveal the links between the characteristics of the respondents (students and parents) and school performance, as well as the relationship between school performance in the various tests and the independent variables related to participation. For this section of the study, the number of students was reduced to 448 (those for whom there were a complete set of data for all of the variables used in the analysis).

Relationship between school performance (overall) and community participation

Our results indicate that the best performing students across all tests are those:

- whose father/tutor participates in the management of school funds, assists in the recruitment of students, participates in the construction of apatams, helps promote a higher degree of participation, and considers his participation in school life to be sufficient;
- who possess a greater quantity of basic supplies and mathematics supplies. There is no correlation whatsoever between the number of school textbooks owned and school performance;
- who were successful in the value test.

Results indicate that this relationship is weak overall, probably because the data are very dispersed (that is, there are major disparities between the students). Furthermore, the survey results show that there is almost no significant relationship between overall student success at school and elements linked directly to community participation. All the other independent variables must therefore be taken into account, especially those related to respondents' characteristics, if we wish to prove the existence of a significant relationship with school performance.

Relationship between all the independent variables and students' performance in the different tests

After the data were processed using the SPSS software, the student sample showed an overall loss of 40%. The initial sample size, which was originally tabulated at 738 students (471 boys and 247 girls), dropped to 448 (282 boys and 166 girls). The regional breakdown for this new sample is as follows: Maritime (305 students, consisting of 192 boys and 113 girls); Central (80 students, consisting of 50 boys and 30 girls); Savanna (63 students, consisting of 40 boys and 23 girls). The data were analyzed first by region and then for all of the regions combined, considering boys and girls separately. The dashes that appeared in the data could not be explained or corrected by the computer technician, who was unable to develop a means of checking the integrity of the SPSS data.

Thus, when we take into account the characteristics of respondents and the characteristics of participation, our results show that student success **in the first two end-of-term examinations** correlates: (i) positively with residence in the Maritime or Savannah regions (Kpendjal prefecture); and (ii) negatively with being a member of the parents' committee, and residence in the Central region (Tchaoudjo and Tcamba prefectures) and in the Oti prefecture of the Savannah region (see Table 7).

Table 7: Relationship between performance in the various examinations and tests and independent variables (personal characteristics and participation variables)

Independent variable	Performance in 2 end-of-term examinations		Performance in knowledge test		Performance in skill test	
	R[1]	P[2]	R	P	R	P
Characteristics of respondents						
Age of father	-0.0045	0.924	0.0393	0.407	-0.0585	0.216
Number of children at the school	-0.0122	0.797	-0.0493	0.298	-0.0107	0.821
Member of parent committee	-0.0933	0.049*	-0.0238	0.616	-0.0028	0.953
Age of child	-0.0295	0.534	-0.0978	0.039*	-0.1211	0.010*
Male	0.0573	0.226	0.0701	0.138	0.0745	0.115
Female	-0.0379	0.424	-0.0463	0.329	-0.0550	0.245
Responsible parent						
Both parents	-0.0618	0.191	-0,0190	0.689	-0.0354	0.454
Grandparents	-0.0344	0.467	0,0123	0.795	0.0185	0.696
Father only	-0.0593	0.210	-0.0078	0.869	-0.0240	0.612
Mother only	-0.0393	0.406	0.0150	0.751	0.0584	0.218
Stepmother	-0.0036	0.939	0.0520	0.272	0.0385	0.416
Friend of parents	-0.0340	0.472	0.0023	0.961	-0.0184	0.698
Characteristics of the school						
Maritime region	0.1545	0.001*	0.5010	0.000*	0.3746	0.000*
Central region	-0.2466	0.000*	-0.3130	0.000*	-0.2082	0.000*
Savannah region	0.0839	0.076	-0.2987	0.000*	-0.2535	0.000*
Prefectures						
Gulf	0.0760	0.108	0.3592	0.000*	0.3618	0.000*
Zio	0.0522	0.270	0.1131	0.017*	0.0389	0.411
Vo	0.0825	0.080	0.1365	0.004*	-0.0072	0.880
Sotouboua	0.0160	0.736	-0.1469	0.002*	-0.1247	0.008*
Tchaoudjo	-0.2300	0.000*	-0.2168	0.000*	-0.1190	0.012*
Tchamba	-0.1725	0.000*	-0.1156	0.014	-0.0789	0.095
Oti	-0.1196	0.011*	-0.0688	0.146	-0.0341	0.472
Tandjoaré	0.0276	0.561	-0.2483	0.000*	-0.2007	0.000*
Kpendjal	0.2738	0.000*	-0.1958	0.000*	-0.2073	0.000*
Financial participation						
School fees	0.0034	0.942	0.1236	0.009*	0.1582	0.001*
Basic material	0.0139	0.770	0.0503	0.288	0.0789	0.095

Table 7 (continued)

Independent variable	Performance in 2 end-of-term examinations		Performance in knowledge test		Performance in skill test	
	R(1)	P(2)	R	P	R	P
Mathematics supplies	0.0138	0.771	0.0740	0.118	0.0843	0.075
School textbooks	-0.0002	0.996	-0.1143	0.015*	-0.1455	0.002*
Social / educational participation						
Help with recruitment	0.0347	0.464	-0.0326	0.491	-0.0084	0.859
Management of school funds	0.0542	0.253	0.0560	0.237	0.0453	0.338
Construction of apatams	0.0722	0.127	0.1791	0.000	0.1598	0.001
Degree of participation	0.0112	0.813	0.1358	0.004	0.1352	0.004
Perception of participation	-0.0369	0.435	-0.1664	0.000	-0.1770	0.000
Value test	0.0126	0.791	0.0233	0.623	0.0527	0.265
Number of years in primary	-	-	0.0413	0.384	0.0328	0.488

(1) R = correlation coefficient; (2) P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

When we take into account each test type (knowledge, skill), the correlation results show that:

- Good performance on the **acquired knowledge tests** correlates significantly: (i) and positively with residence in the Maritime region, especially in the Gulf, Zio, and Vo prefectures, financial participation of the parents (school fees), participation in the construction of apatams, and social participation; (ii) and negatively with the age of the students, residence in the Central region, especially the Sotouboua and Tchaoudjo prefectures, residence in the Savannah region, especially the Tandjoaré and Kpendjal prefectures, student possession of school textbooks, and perception of participation.

- Good performance on the **skill tests** correlates significantly: (i) and positively with residence in the Maritime region, especially in the Gulf prefecture, financial participation of the parents (school fees), participation in the construction of apatams, and social participation; (ii) and negatively with the age of the students, residence in the Central region, especially the Sotouboua and Tchaoudjo prefectures, residence in the Savannah region, especially the Tandjoaré and Kpendjal prefectures, student possession of school textbooks, and perception of participation.

Our study also revealed a correlation between **school fees** and the independent variables linked to participation. In this respect, the results of statistically significant correlations ($p < 0.05$) indicate that there is a significant link between school fees and most of the components of parental participation (see Table 8). Parents who pay higher school fees are those who are the most involved in recruiting students and in constructing apatams; those who consider their participation significant, do participate to a significant degree, and provide the most school supplies for their children. They generally live in the Maritime region.

Table 8: Relationships between the level of school fees and certain independent variables

Independent variables	R(1)	P(2)
Help with recruitment of students	0.12	0.01*
Construction of apatams	0.28	0.00*
Help with management of school funds	0.08	0.06
Parents' view on their own participation	0.17	0.00*
Level of parental participation	0.17	0.00*
Quantity of basic material owned	0.11	0.02*
Quantity of mathematics supplies	0.16	0.00*
Number of school textbooks	0.24	0.00*
Maritime region	0.09	0.05*
Gulf prefecture	0.16	0.00*
Zio prefecture	-0.13	0.01*
Vo prefecture	0.06	0.17
Central region	0.04	0.40
Sotouboua prefecture	-0.11	0.02*
Tchaoudjo prefecture	0.22	0.00*
Tchamba prefecture	-0.10	0.04*
Savannah region	-0.17	0.00*
Oti prefecture	-0.10	0.03*
Tandjoré prefecture	-0.08	0.07
Kpendjal prefecture	-0.09	0.05*
Student lives with father only	0.09	0.06

(1) R = correlation coefficient; (2) P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

Several of the correlations between the **gender of the child** and certain independent variables linked to the characteristics of respondents or to forms of parental participation are statistically significant (see Table 9):

- Boys primarily come from families in which the parents are older, while the girls have younger parents. This would explain the contribution made by younger parents toward the enrollment of girls.

- Boys are less well equipped with school supplies than girls. This supports the previous statement, with regard to the attitude of younger parents toward the enrollment of girls.

- In the Maritime region, more girls than boys are in sixth grade, while the situation is reversed in the two other regions, indicating that parents from rural regions have a greater tendency to keep girls at home.

Table 9: Relationship between the gender of the child and certain independent variables

Independent variables	Boys		Girls	
	R(1)	P(2)	R	P
Age of father	0.12	0.01*	-0.11	0.02*
Level of participation	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.06
Quantity of basic material	-0.08	0.07	0.11	0.03*
Quantity of mathematics supplies	-0.12	0.01*	0.14	0.00*
Quantity of school textbooks	-0.16	0.00*	0.16	0.00*
Maritime region	-0.10	0.02*	0.15	0.00*
Central region	0.06	0.19	-0.12	0.02*
Savannah region	0.06	0.14	-0.06	0.20
Number of years spent in primary cycle	-0.05	0.23	0.04	0.45

(1) R = correlation coefficient; (2) P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

Correlations were also established between **student performance** in the different examinations (end-of-term, knowledge, and skill tests) and the following variables: quantity of material owned (basic, mathematics, textbooks), results of the values test, and age of students. The results shown in Table 10 suggest positive significant correlations between:

- The performance of students in the knowledge test and the quantity of school textbooks owned. The more textbooks students own, the better their performance in the knowledge test.
- The performance of students in the knowledge test and students' ages. The youngest students performed best.
- The scores achieved in the knowledge-test dictation, quantity of school textbooks owned, and students' age. The students who did best in the dictation test own more school textbooks, and are the youngest.
- The scores achieved in the knowledge-test mathematics component and the number of school textbooks. Those who succeeded in this test own more school textbooks.
- The scores achieved in the spelling component of the skill test with the quantity of basic supplies owned and the quantity of school textbooks. The most successful students in this skill test are the best equipped.
- Students' performance in the mathematics component of the skill test and the number of school textbooks.
- Students' performance in the sciences skill test and the quantity of mathematics supplies and school textbooks and the student's age. Those who earned the highest scores are the best equipped and the youngest.

- History/geography scores in the knowledge test and student's age. The youngest are the most successful.

Table 10: Correlations between student performance and certain independent variables

Performance	Qt. of basic supplies		Qt. of math supplies		Qt. of textbooks		Values test		Age of students	
	R[1]	P[2]	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P
School	0.01	0.77	0.01	0.77	0.00	0.99	0.01	0.79	-0.03	0.53
Acquired knowledge	0.05	0.29	0.07	0.12	0.11	0.02*	0.02	0.62	-0.10	0.04*
Aptitudes developed	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.14	0.00*	0.05	0.26	-0.12	0.01*
Know. test dictation scores	0.06	0.19	0.07	0.09	0.11	0.02*	- 0.01	0.76	-0.13	0.00*
Know. test math scores	0.03	0.49	0.07	0.10	0.10	0.03*	0.04	0.33	-0.02	0.65
Know. test sci. scores	0.06	0.16	0.00	0.87	0.06	0.14	0.01	0.82	-0.05	0.23
Know. test geog./hist. scores	-0.04	0.38	0.01	0.73	0.00	0.87	0.01	0.73	-0.09	0.04*
Skill test spelling scores	0.12	0.00*	0.06	0.16	0.12	0.01*	-0.01	0.69	-0.06	0.14
Skill test math scores	0.04	0.37	0.05	0.20	0.10	0.03*	0.06	0.18	-0.03	0.41
Skill test science scores	0.01	0.72	0.09	0.03*	0.15	0.00*	0.05	0.21	-0.13	0.00*
Skill test geog./hist. scores	0.04	0.38	-0.01	0.80	0.00	0.95	0.04	0.36	-0.15	0.00*

[1] R = correlation coefficient; [2] P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

On the other hand, our study does not reveal any statistically significant correlation between:

- Scores in the natural sciences component of the knowledge test and the student's age or the quantity of textbooks or school supplies.

- The performance of students in the skill tests and the basic supplies or mathematics supplies owned, or the results of the values test.

c. Multiple-regression analysis

First two end-of-term examinations

Considering the role played (coefficient of determination – R^2) by each independent variable in the performance of all sixth grade students in the examinations of the first two terms of the 1994-1995 school year, the independent variables which seem to explain the variation of performance to a significant degree are, in decreasing order of importance: (i) the number of children in the family that are enrolled in school; (ii) participation of the parent in the management of school funds; (iii) the student lives with his or her father; (iv) the level of school fees; (v) parents' views of their own participation; (vi) age of the student; and (vi) the student lives with his or her mother only.

The following variables do not explain performance to any significant degree: (i) the gender of the child; (ii) the age of the father/tutor; (iii) the desire of parents to participate more in school life; (iv) the number of years spent in the primary cycle; (v) the student lives with both his or her parents; (vi) the student lives with his or her stepmother; and (vii) the student lives with a friend of his or her parents.

When we consider the data **by region** (see Table 11), we notice that:

- In the Maritime region, all the variables have a significant influence on variations in student performance in the end-of-term examinations. The most important are, in descending order of importance: the number of children in the family that are enrolled in school, the level of school fees, whether the student lives with his or her grandparents or a friend of the parents, parent helps with the recruitment of students, being female, and number of years spent in the primary cycle.
- In the Central region, no variable explains variation in performance to any significant degree, except the student living with his/her parents.
- In the Savannah region, only the variable of being female explains this variation to any significant degree.

With regard to the **gender of the child**, our results indicate that for boys (with the exception of: parents help in the recruitment of students, number of years spent in the primary cycle, and lives with father only), all variables explain, to a significant degree, the performance of students in end-of-term examinations. In the case of girls, almost all the variables also explain performance to a significant degree, except: the number of children in the family enrolled in school, parents' views of their own participation, and student lives with both parents, his or her grandparents, mother only, or friend of the parents. The most significant variables are therefore not the same for boys and girls.

Table 11: Results of multiple regression analysis of student performance in 1995 knowledge tests, for the three regions, and by gender

Independent variable	Maritime		Central		Savannah		Boys		Girls	
	$R^{2(1)}$	$P^{(2)}$	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P
Age of father	0.05	0.00*	0.08	0.17	0.21	0.29	0.06	0.00*	0.06	0.00*
No. of children at the school	0.10	0.01*	0.00	-	0.20	0.22	0.07	0.02*	0.12	0.26
Level of school fees	0.10	0.01*	0.17	0.33	0.09	0.10	0.04	0.00*	0.10	0.02*
Part. parent/ recruitment students	0.09	0.00*	0.14	0.09	-	-	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.01*
Part. parent/ construction apatams	0.08	0.00*	0.13	0.10	0.21	0.44	0.04	0.00*	0.11	0.04*
Part. parent/manage. of funds	0.10	0.06	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.12	0.07	0.05*	-	-

Table 11 (continued)

Independent variable	Maritime		Central		Savannah		Boys		Girls	
	$R^{2(1)}$	$P^{(2)}$	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P
Parents' perception of their participation	0.09	0.00*	0.16	0.17	0.20	0.18	0.04	0.00*	0.12	0.11
Parents' desire to participate more	0.09	0.00*	0.11	0.12	-	-	0.07	0.01*	0.08	0.01*
Parent on parents' committee	0.07	0.00*	0.15	0.09	0.11	0.09	0.01	0.03*	0.07	0.01*
Age of student	0.03	0.00*	0.16	0.10	0.19	0.15	0.06	0.01*	0.10	0.03*
Being male student	0.05	0.00*	0.16	0.21	0.06	0.13	-	-	-	-
Being female student	0.10	0.08	0.17	0.40	0.05	0.05*	-	-	-	-
No. of years in primary cycle	0.10	0.04*	0.16	0.13	0.16	0.12	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.02*
Student lives with both parents	-	-	0.02	0.12	-	-	-	-	0.12	0.08
Student lives with grandparents	0.10	0.03*	0.03	0.32	0.18	0.13	0.07	0.03*	0.11	0.06
Student lives with father only	0.06	0.00*	0.03	0.41	0.21	0.36	0.07	0.13	0.04	0.01*
Student lives with mother only	0.07	0.00*	0.03	0.18	0.13	0.11	0.05	0.00*	0.12	0.15
Student lives with stepmother	0.08	0.00*	0.05	0.27	-	-	0.07	0.04*	-	-
Student lives with friend of parents	0.10	0.02	0.04	0.03*	-	-	0.06	0.00*	0.12	0.20

(1) R = correlation coefficient; (2) P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

Knowledge tests

With regard to the **knowledge test**, our results indicate that the independent variables that seem to explain, to a significant degree, the performance of **all students of the sample** in this test in 1995 are, in descending order of importance: (i) the level of school fees (social participation of parent); (ii) parent is a member of the parents' committee; (iii) participation of parent in the management of school funds. The following variables have a significant influence only with an equal weighting: (i) the age of the student; (ii) the number of children enrolled in school; (iii) the student lives with father only; (iv) being female.

With respect to results **by region**, we note that (see Table 12):

- In the Maritime region, nearly all the independent variables explain the performance of students in the knowledge test, to a significant and important degree. The exceptions are age of student, and being female, which have less of an influence.
- In the Central region, the most significant independent variables are (in descending order of influence): participation in the construction of apatams, parents' desire to participate more,

age of student, lives with father only, parent is a member of the parents' committee, lives with friend of parents or with grandparents, number of children enrolled, and school fees.

- In the Savannah region, the results are similar to those in the Maritime region. All the variables seem to explain, to a significant degree, the performance of students in the knowledge test. Their relative weight, however, seems to be higher (especially: student lives with his or her father or mother, parent is on parents' committee, level of school fees and participation of parents in management of funds).

Table 12: Results of multiple regression analysis of student performance in the first two end-of-term examinations 1994-1995, by region and gender

Independent variables	Maritime		Central		Savannah		Boys		Girls	
	R^2 (1)	P (2)	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P
Age of father	-	-	0.17	0.17	0.09	0.01*	0.12	0.00*	0.21	0.00*
No. of children at the school	0.07	0.00*	0.06	0.03*	0.28	0.00*	-	-	0.08	0.00*
Level of school fees	0.10	0.00*	0.00	0.02*	0.30	0.04*	0.13	0.00*	0.16	0.00*
Part. parent/ recruitment students	0.09	0.00*	0.01	0.20	0.30	0.08	0.10	0.00*	0.24	0.00*
Part. parent/ construction apatams	0.12	0.00*	0.16	0.04*	0.28	0.00*	0.07	0.00*	0.27	0.00*
Part. parent/manage. of funds	0.12	0.00*	0.05	0.02*	0.29	0.02*	0.13	0.00*	0.26	0.00*
Parent perception of their participation	0.12	0.00*	0.18	0.26	0.20	0.00*	0.05	0.00*	0.26	0.00*
Parents' desire to participate more	0.12	0.00*	0.16	0.03*	-	-	0.13	0.00*	0.13	0.00*
Parent on parents' committee	0.12	0.00*	0.14	0.02*	0.29	0.01*	0.13	0.00*	0.27	0.00*
Age of student	0.03	0.00*	0.16	0.05*	0.20	0.00*	0.09	0.00*	0.23	0.00*
Being male student	-	-	0.21	0.12	0.26	0.00*	-	-	-	-
Being female student	0.05	0.00*	0.18	0.32	0.26	0.00*	-	-	-	-
No. of years in primary cycle	0.11	0.00*	-	-	0.23	0.00*	0.10	0.00*	0.18	0.00*
Student lives with both parents	-	-	0.17	0.13	-	-	-	-	-	-
Student lives with grandparents	0.12	0.00*	0.08	0.02*	0.24	0.00*	0.13	0.00*	-	-
Student lives with father only	0.12	0.00*	0.15	0.02*	0.30	0.02*	0.12	0.00*	-	-
Student lives with mother only	0.12	0.00*	0.17	0.10	0.30	0.05*	0.12	0.00*	0.25	0.00*
Student lives with stepmother	0.11	0.00*	0.17	0.07	-	-	0.11	0.00*	-	-
Student lives with friend of parents	0.12	0.00*	0.10	0.01*	-	-	0.10	0.00*	0.27	0.00*

(1) R = correlation coefficient; (2) P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

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Looking at the results according to the **gender of the child**, we note that the trend is the same for boys and girls, since all independent variables explain, to a significant degree, students' performance in the knowledge test.

Skill tests

With respect to data for **all students**, nearly all independent variables help to explain, to a significant degree, student performance in the skill test. The exception is being a member of a parents' committee. The most significant are, in descending order of importance: (i) the number of children enrolled in school; (ii) the level of school fees; (iii) helps with recruitment of students; (iv) participation in the management of funds; (v) age of father; and (vi) being a girl.

With regard to results per **region** (see Table 13), we note that:

- In the Maritime region, all the variables seem to explain, to a significant degree, the variation in student performance, especially age of father, helps with recruitment of students, participation in management of school funds, desire to participate more, number of years in the primary cycle, and lives with father, mother, or friends of the parents.
- In the Central region, all the variables are significant, with a higher weighting, especially on construction of apatams, age of student, and lives with stepmother.
- In the Savannah region, all the variables explain, to a still more significant degree, the variation in student performance. The most important are: being a girl, lives with father only, being a boy, the number of years spent in the primary cycle, and participation in management.

Table 13: Results of multiple regression analysis of student performance in 1995 skill tests, for the three regions, and by gender

Independent	Maritime		Central		Savannah		Boys		Girls	
variables	$R^{2(1)}$	$P^{(2)}$	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P	R^2	P
Age of father	0.11	0.00*	0.22	0.00*	-	-	0.12	0.00*	0.21	0.00*
No. of students at the school	-	-	0.21	0.00*	0.25	0.00*	0.10	0.00*	0.13	0.00*
Level of school fees	0.09	0.00*	-	-	-	-	0.15	0.00*	0.08	0.00*
Part. parent/ recruitement students	0.11	0.00*	0.20	0.00*	0.31	0.00*	0.15	0.00*	0.21	0.00*
Part. parent/ construction apatams	0.10	0.00*	0.25	0.03*	0.15	0.00*	0.06	0.00*	0.21	0.00*
Part. parent/manage. of funds	0.11	0.00*	0.21	0.00*	0.34	0.00*	0.25	0.00*	-	-
Parent perception of their participation	-	-	0.23	0.00*	0.29	0.00*	0.04	0.00*	0.17	0.00*
Parents' desire to participate more	0.11	0.00*	0.07	0.00*	-	-	-	-	0.16	0.00*
Parent on parents' committee	-	-	-	-	0.33	0.00*	0.13	0.00*	0.21	0.00*

Table 13 (continued)

Independent variables	Maritime $R^{2(1)}$	Maritime $P^{(2)}$	Central R^2	Central P	Savannah R^2	Savannah P	Boys R^2	Boys P	Girls R^2	Girls P
Age of student	0.04	0.00*	0.25	0.02*	0.08	0.01*	0.09	0.00*	0.20	0.00*
Being male student	0.05	0.00*	-	-	0.35	0.02*	-	-	-	-
Being female student	-	-	0.23	0.00*	0.34	0.01*	-	-	-	-
No. of years in primary cycle	0.11	0.00*	-	-	0.34	0.00*	0.12	0.00*	0.15	0.00*
Student lives with both parents	-	-	0.24	0.02*	-	-	-	-	0.18	0.00*
Student lives with grandparents	0.10	0.00*	-	-	0.32	0.00*	0.14	0.00*	0.19	0.00*
Student lives with father only	0.11	0.02*	0.24	0.00*	0.35	0.01*	0.15	0.00*	0.19	0.00*
Student lives with mother only	0.11	0.01*	0.24	0.01*	-	-	0.13	0.00*	0.20	0.00*
Student lives with stepmother	0.10	0.00*	0.25	0.04*	-	-	0.14	0.00*	-	-
Student lives with friend of parents	0.11	0.01*	0.24	0.01*	-	-	0.14	0.00*	0.21	0.00*

(1) R = correlation coefficient; (2) P = significance threshold; * = significant relationship

With regard to the **gender of the child**, a similar trend is apparent for boys and girls. All variables seem to explain performance to a significant degree. The most important variables for boys are: level of school fees, participation in management of funds, and lives with father only. Among girls, the most important are: age of father, helps with the recruitment of students, participation in the construction of apatams, being a member of parents' committee, age of student, and lives with mother only or with friends of the parents.

d. Summary of frequency analysis

Characteristics of students in the sample

Sixty percent of students in the final grade are 1 to 13 years older than the statutory age for the grade (12). There are two main reasons for this: the successive repeating of grades (up to five years per student) and late enrollment of students living in rural areas.

Financial participation

Despite parents' generally low level of expenditure on their children's schooling (less than 25,000 CFA francs in 70% of cases), the level seems sufficient, if not exorbitant, when one takes into account the number of children enrolled in school, per parent included in the sample (60% have 4 children or more attending school) and the socio-professional category of the parent (nearly 60% are artisans, traders, or farmers).

If most students (62%) own all the basic school supplies (pen, pencil, eraser, ruler), a very significant number of students own neither enough mathematics supplies nor enough textbooks, and very few are given enough supervision. The students included in the sample thus lack study tools and are most often left to themselves during their school careers. This situation has a negative influence on the students' learning experience and school performance, especially at the end of the primary cycle, when they take national examinations.

Social participation

The high degree of parental participation with regard to needy children indicates parents' concern for the development of education in their local district. Fewer parents give financial or material aid to teachers, whom they probably consider to be better off.

Participation in the educational process

A large number of parents contribute to the various activities related to school life, but few participate in the financial arena (management of school social-security funds) or in the careers of teachers, for whom they do not feel any great affinity (advice for teachers, settlement of conflicts between teachers, curriculum development, and request for teacher assignment).

Parents' perception of their participation in school life

The survey shows that parents have to make up for the decrease in government aid by participating in ways that are not formally required of them, but which are essential to ensuring a certain quality of education and to ensuring that their children succeed in school.

Perception of teachers and school principals

Teachers' perception of parental participation is rather negative, in the sense that they regard parental participation as largely insufficient. Whereas students' parents say they make a significant effort to help the school and to provide their children with supplies and school textbooks, teachers say that they have to cope each day with a critical lack of textbooks, teaching supplies, classrooms, and desks. On the other hand, 50 percent of school principals say that parental participation is both significant and sufficient. Nearly 50 percent of teachers say that contributed funds are poorly managed (neither teachers nor parents are involved with these funds). Thus, although parents contribute to the funding of their children's education and view their contribution in a positive light, they say that the fact that they cannot contribute sufficiently to the management and the use of contributed funds hampers efforts to improve the quality of education.

Skills

In general terms, extended schooling significantly increases the educational costs to be paid by nearly 60 percent of parents of large families who are from a low-income socio-professional category.

Performance in the knowledge tests

Evaluation of students' performance over the first two terms of the year and their results in the spelling, mathematics, science, and history/geography components of the knowledge test administered by researchers at the end of the school year reveals that students' academic level is average overall. Sixty-five percent gained the average overall score for the first two terms, while only 47 percent earned the average score in the knowledge tests.

- Eighty-four percent of students fared extremely poorly in spelling. Their essays were riddled with spelling and grammatical mistakes. This shows that they have considerable difficulty in transcribing a thought, understanding a text, and discriminating among sounds, oppositions, and phonetic interference.
- In reading, the students did not achieve the level required for Grade 2.
- In mathematics, the high failure rate is explained by problems related to semantics.
- In science, 73 percent of students earned the average score, while 94 percent attained the average score in history/geography. These performances are explained by the types of teaching and evaluation: the students learn summaries by heart and then simply reproduce them when required.

All of the difficulties encountered in the acquisition of knowledge are due to inappropriate teaching methods and the lack of qualified teachers.

Performance in the skill tests

These tests served to evaluate the development of skills likely to be used in activities related to daily life.

- In French, only 20 percent passed the skill test, indicating that students had great difficulty in communicating in a spontaneous manner, either orally or in written form, outside of school exercises.
- In history/geography, only 6.8 percent passed the skill test, suggesting that few of the concepts of history or geography that they learn by rote in school filter through into their daily lives.
- In science, results are significantly brighter. Sixty percent passed the skill tests, a performance attributed to the use of the new textbook on science and life skills, produced by Togo educational specialists and researchers.

These results are supported by the views of parents, 80 percent of whom say that in daily life, their children are unable to apply the knowledge they acquire in school, either to write, to make objects of common use, or use modern farming techniques. Parents doubt the effectiveness of the education system. Students, they say, are taught so that they can pass examinations, and are not prepared for the practical realities of daily life.

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Performance in the values test

Results of the values test show that most students are very interested in social integration outside school. However, the results indicate that the class teaching philosophy tends more toward an approach based on strict discipline and on instilling theoretical and abstract knowledge into students, to ensure the internal efficiency of the education system, rather than toward activities that might develop students' skills or their spirit of initiative. This phenomenon is sustained by a lack of trust between students and teachers and by an inability to see the external quality of education as a criterion for success in life. The results of the values test also demonstrate that students would like to receive instruction in different practical and cultural activities, but do not have opportunities to do so, because teachers' initiatives are limited to class organization and are also handicapped by the conformist approach taken by principals, a lack of cooperation among the various actors at the school, and the strictness of school discipline. Thus, the need to "develop a spirit of initiative," expressed by students during the value test, is countered by a strong resistance to change on the part of the various actors at the school.

e. Summary of correlation and multiple regression analysis

The results of our study generally suggest a significant correlation between the independent variable of participation (financial, social, educational) of parents and the dependent variable—that is, their children's development of skills (end-of-term examinations, knowledge and skill tests) in sixth grade.

Correlation analysis suggested a near total absence of a significant relationship between students' overall school success and elements linked directly to community participation. The most significant links were the age of students (the youngest students achieved the best scores), the region (students of the Maritime and Savannah regions performed better than their colleagues in the Central region) and, to a lesser degree, their parents' participation in the parents' committee.

The correlations between the level of school fees and the different forms of parental participation are all very significant. It was noted that the parents who pay high school fees are those who are involved to a significant degree in school activities (help with the recruitment of students, construction of apatams) and who provide their children with enough school supplies, in all disciplines. The parents who pay higher school fees live in the Maritime region, where the enrollment rate is also higher.

Correlation and multiple regression analysis show that the more parents contribute financially and participate in the various school activities the more they help to improve the quality of education, in terms of students' skills and their success at school. Students whose parents pay higher school fees, perform school social activities, and buy teaching supplies produce the best scores in the end-of-term examinations and in the knowledge and skill tests. These parents tend to supply younger children better than they supply older children, and supply girls better than they do boys, especially in the (more urban) Maritime region, which is more favorable to the enrollment of girls, even though they do not perform as well as boys in the evaluation tests.

Student performances in the Central region were much weaker than in the other two, and this may be attributed to religious constraints (parents prefer to enroll their children in Koranic schools) and pastoral constraints (children are very often required to guard the family's flock).

In more specific terms, the analytical results showed:

With regard to financial participation: the level of school fees paid by parents influences the performance of the student, in that children whose parents pay higher school fees perform better in the knowledge and skill tests. These students mostly come from the Maritime region, where school fees are higher.

With regard to teaching supplies: students who have a large number of supplies do better. The youngest students seem to be better equipped than the oldest, and girls better than boys, even if they do not perform as well in the different tests. The students of the Maritime region are better equipped and the proportion of girls in the sample who are from this region is higher.

With regard to social and educational participation: the most significant forms of participation are the following: participation of parents in the management of school funds (which has a positive impact on performance in the knowledge and skill tests), and parents help with the recruitment of students and the construction of apatams (which seems to have a positive influence on the performance of students in the skill test).

With regard to parent characteristics: or the type of care provided for children: we noted that living with his or her mother only has a significant influence on student performance in all tests in the Maritime region, in the skill test in the Central region, and in the knowledge and skill test in the Savannah region. On the other hand, only student performance in the knowledge and skill tests in all regions and end-of-term examinations in the Maritime region is positively influenced by living with his or her father only. Lastly, students who live with their grandparents and their stepmother perform well in the knowledge and skill tests. Development of skills seems more assured when the child lives with his or her mother only, grandparents, or stepmother, environments in which children seem to be more associated with the practical and productive activities carried out by the people with whom they live.

As far as perceptions are concerned: parents' perceptions do seem to influence children's performance. The students who do best are those whose parents regard their own participation as sufficient, but who wish to participate more. On the other hand, the youngest parents tend to contribute more toward the education of their children, but, although they regard their participation as sufficient, they do not wish to increase that participation. Furthermore, these parents are excluded from decisions about the use of school resources, especially contributed funds. Thus, subsequent studies should determine whether parents' resistance to increasing their participation (a resistance that is apparent in their expressed perceptions) is related to the issue of the management of resources, or to a desire to see other actors contribute to the life of the school.

With regard to curricula, considered in the light of reflected values: our study reveals that student performance is influenced by school and social values, which are in turn reflected in student conduct. In other words, the students who earned the best scores in the value test also earned the best scores in the other tests. Hence, the more a school contributes toward the development of the values of its environment, the more socially productive are its own students. However, our study noted that societal values are not being integrated into school programs, that there is a low level of basic knowledge which is essential to skill development, that parents' financial participation is not being properly managed, and that learning environments are often inappropriate (shortage of textbooks, inappropriate textbooks, inappropriate teaching methods, poorly qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms).

5. *Conclusions and recommendations*

a. Conclusions

Our study produced a range of data demonstrating the importance of several forms of community participation (financial, social, and educational) by students' parents, with regard to the life of the school and the quality of education, especially in terms of the development of students' skills. It suggests that parents' financial participation (contribution and purchase of school equipment) is the form that influences development of children's skills most strongly. This is certainly nothing new, of course, and yet past studies on education in African countries have rarely been able to demonstrate this fact in statistical terms. Our research also offers new and rarely discussed data on the positive relationship between a single-parent-type family environment (in which the child lives with his or her mother only) and the child's school performance.

Despite the efforts of parents, our study shows that students' level of acquisition in terms of knowledge and skill is quite low. Students do not succeed in developing a theoretical foundation that can be applied to the every-day reality of their local environment. The school system continues to instill knowledge into students with the sole intention of enabling them to pass national examinations. This has a negative impact in terms of children's ability to develop the kind of instrumental resources that can be applied directly in their daily lives. Furthermore, the management of those resources that stem from parents' financial participation appears to be defective, because it does not directly benefit children. Also, the youngest group of parents (who put more into the education of their children) question whether contributed funds are being used appropriately. Thus, it is the way institutions function and schools' policies that explain why schools lack effectiveness—whether internal effectiveness (desired by the government) or external effectiveness (desired by the community).

More specifically, our study highlighted a number of obstacles and problems with respect to improving the quality of education, especially:

- societal values are not being integrated into school programs;
- students demonstrate a low acquisition level in terms of basic knowledge and skills;
- many problems related to students' learning environments exist, especially: shortage of, and inappropriateness of school textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, outmoded teaching methods, poorly qualified teachers;
- money contributed by parents to the schools is not being properly managed;
- girls are not performing well in school.

However, our results (both those that reveal the perceptions of the various actors and those that concern forms of participation and forms of student skills) enable us to:

- provide information that is of interest in terms of developing better operational strategies and tools that might encourage the effective and efficient participation of communities in the matter of funding, the formulation of curricula, and skills development;
- offer new avenues of research and open the way for more in-depth studies on strengthening the role of communities in educational decision-making and on the role of various actors;
- provide statistical information useful to the various actors involved in coordinating, harmonizing, and strengthening community participation, and especially to the decision makers and sponsors involved in formulating policies and strategies designed to improve education through community participation;
- help enhance our understanding of the relationship between community participation and skills development, especially with a view to comparing these phenomena with those in other African countries.

Given the complex nature of the subject to be covered and the constraints linked to funding the research itself, our study was not able to exploit to a sufficient degree the data that emerged from personal interviews with parents, principals, and teachers. The study also contains certain methodological and conceptual flaws. First, it suffers from a lack of clarity and analytical precision regarding the data that emerged from the individual interviews carried out among parents, 50 school principals, and 50 teachers. Furthermore, the values test might be better constructed and systematized with a view to clarifying the degree to which the school learning environment does or does not complement the transmission of knowledge emanating from the child's environment (from the family or community).

Also, our study did not seek to identify the factors that impede or facilitate participation. Those factors may have a wide variety of connotations (economic, demographic, sociocultural, religious, or institutional) depending on the context and the type of community. Essential prerequisites for community action, the factors that impede or facilitate participation in education would benefit from being discussed within their specific contexts (regional conditions, local economies, etc.) and in terms of their practical application, with a view to establishing their frequency and their correlation.

Lastly, if our study has shown the importance of participation and its various links with the development of skills, it also showed that this participation constitutes a logistical support, without being fully integrated within the education system (especially in terms of educational approaches). Thus, our study shows the importance, firstly of changing the policies that have led to products that do not meet society's expectations, and secondly of developing a strategy aimed at ensuring that the education system takes due account of students' home environments, with a view to ensuring that schools respond more effectively to the needs and realities of local communities. This strategy ought to aim for two complementary goals: (i) a far-reaching reorganization of schools (aimed at making local-community involvement more effective and more solid); (ii) and improvement of the external effectiveness of education. The following recommendations are intended to help achieve these goals.

b. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on our observations concerning the survey results.

In order to increase the external effectiveness of education, it is suggested that:

- Education curricula be made effective through learning experiences that are more in touch with social realities and conditions in each local community, especially by developing instrumental resources that can be directly applied to daily life. The goal is to transform curricula so that at every stage of their acquisition of theoretical knowledge, children are provided with the instrumental resources that they must have if they are to be able to apply their knowledge to the realities of daily life, and are also taught relevant social values, which should be reflected in their conduct.
- New school textbooks, adapted to new curricula, be produced.
- School funds be properly managed. Funds should be used above all to provide students with essential text books.
- The teaching profession be improved.

To reorganize the schools, the following actions are necessary:

- Improve the sharing of responsibilities between the government (which would retain powers related to supervision of the educational sector, academic control, and the allocation of subsidies to the regions, based on their needs) and local school communities, which would be in charge of direct management and mobilization of school resources.
- Increase awareness among different partners within the community, with a view to increasing community participation.
- Increase the contributions made by central and local authorities to basic education.

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